

**LABOUR'S
TURNING POINT
1880-1900**

**HISTORY IN THE MAKING
NINETEENTH CENTURY
Volume Three
*LAWRENCE & WISHART***

LABOUR'S TURNING POINT

HISTORY IN THE MAKING

GENERAL EDITOR: *Dona Torr*

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NINETEENTH CENTURY VOL. III

1880-1900

Extracts from contemporary sources edited by

ERIC J. HOBSBAWM

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

THE series *History in the Making* is intended to illustrate from contemporary sources the thoughts and activities of men and women engaged in historic movements for social and political freedom. Our history is inexhaustibly rich in material of this character: in autobiographies, memoirs and contemporary narratives, in trade union records, in the evidence given in courts of law and before Royal Commissions, and in the long succession of periodical literature inspired by movements of the people; but under present conditions all this wealth is becoming increasingly inaccessible to the general reader and to many students. Within the limited scope of small volumes we attempt to fill the gap, and it is hoped that the series may prove useful as a supplement to more general works. The broad guiding principle of selection is to exemplify theories, actions and organisations in their development from social conditions, rather than conditions by themselves.

Wherever omissions have been made in the original text of an extract these are clearly indicated by the usual marks. Any inserted words are placed in square brackets.

The present volume is the third of three, illustrating the history of working-class movements in the nineteenth century. Volume I, edited by Max Morris, covers the period 1815-48; Volume II, edited by James B. Jefferys, the period 1849-1879. Two volumes of seventeenth-century extracts, edited by Christopher Hill and Edmund Dell, are now in preparation, and the series will also include an eighteenth century and at least one twentieth-century volume.

INTRODUCTION

THIS volume covers the years in which the British Labour movement, as we now know it, took shape. The men with whom we deal are our fathers and grandfathers, many of them still alive, the events are within living memory, and the movement has been advancing without a major break—though at varying speed—ever since. The purpose of this book must therefore be twofold: both to bring the period closer and to bring it into some sort of historical perspective. For a powerful tradition such as that which still surrounds the names of Keir Hardie, John Burns, Tom Mann, William Morris and the others—even when it is not a distorted tradition, such as the one from which Hardie and Morris have suffered—must be supplemented by cool analysis if we are to learn the lessons of these early years of British Labour.

I

Our period was a vitally important one for Britain. Between 1870 and 1900 its industrial monopoly of the world came to an end, challenged by German and American competition. At the same time Britain lost that military safety and absolute control of the seas which the country had enjoyed ever since the Napoleonic Wars, for new Great Powers, Japan and a unified Germany and U.S.A., had arisen. In common with other advanced countries, we passed into the age of Imperialism, when a small group of Powers divided the world, and fought among themselves in their struggles for its redivision, and when crises, wars and the Labour Movement were to challenge the very foundations of the capitalist system. The structure of British economy began to change, though rather more slowly and informally than elsewhere, for British capitalists still enjoyed so many advantages from the days of their monopoly that it took a long time for

their position to be seriously undermined. The economy of many small, bitterly competitive firms each run by an individual or a few partners was being destroyed by the growth of large corporations, of monopolies, of modern large-scale finance, of concentrated production. The technique of industry was changing, too, with the transition from iron to steel, the introduction of new sources of power, such as electricity, new machines, and, above all, new methods of mass production. None of these changes had gone very far by modern standards, but to contemporaries they seemed rapid and startling.

Economic historians call this period of transition from British world monopoly to Imperialism the "Great Depression" (1873-96). Our volume might therefore almost be called "The Labour Movement and the Great Depression." The Depression was a long period of falling prices and profits, and, for certain industries, notably agriculture, of definite decline. From time to time (as in 1879-80, 1885-7 and 1891-3) it was broken by bouts similar to the slumps we know—with mass unemployment, falling output, etc. There was, of course, no government provision for the old and unemployed, so that a slump hit the workers with full force, leading to the misery and unemployed unrest which was so typical of the period, especially in London (see Nos. 23, 107-9, 117). Of course at different times one industry or region would be much worse affected by the Depression than others—thus the growth of the I.L.P. in the West Riding of Yorkshire (Nos. 61, 100, 102, 106) was largely due to the special local effects of the bout of 1891-3 and of the American tariff of 1890. However, as the cost of living fell steadily throughout the period, the more sheltered workers, or those affected only intermittently, like some of the organised "aristocracy of labour," did not feel its full weight.

Great changes were also taking place in British politics. The years from 1850-80 had been comparatively calm. The Radicals, a wing of the great Liberal Party, united middle-class manufacturers with the favoured sections of

the workers, who seldom dreamed of setting up in complete independence of their middle-class allies. They enjoyed certain solid advantages over other workers, and shared with middle-class Radicals certain political aims: the fight against aristocratic privilege and for the extension of parliamentary democracy. Moreover, the gap between capitalists and skilled workers was often comparatively small, and if it was only sometimes bridged, as was still the case in the Potteries, it could be further narrowed. In Lancashire, Sidney Webb claimed, most mill managers were taken from the ranks of the Spinners' Union. Unions did not therefore regard themselves as bodies challenging capitalism as such. (Nos. 8-11). But the privileged position of the aristocracy of labour was about to be seriously modified. Furthermore, the middle-class part of the "Radical Programme" had been largely carried out in 1867-74, and the united front between the two wings of the Radicals was correspondingly weakened.

But British politics were also changing in another respect. In the twenty years or so before the Depression—the "Golden Age" of British capitalism—employers favoured a policy of almost total State inactivity (*laissez-faire*), rather as American capitalists did until the Depression of 1929. All they wanted was to be left alone, under conditions most favourable to them, to make money. After the end of Chartism labour was mainly occupied with the fight for rights of democracy and organisation; but in expanding capitalism a moderate, privileged artisan aristocracy could come to economic terms with the employers without State intervention. Capitalists continued to object with great vigour to the mollycoddling of the poor, the existence of trade unions, or any interference with the sacred right of private enterprise. But in 1867 numbers of workers won the vote, and more would inevitably get it. Far-sighted employers began to recognise, with Joseph Chamberlain, that the old mechanism by which working-class discontent had been made ineffective would no longer work. "What insurance," asked Chamberlain, "will wealth find it to its

of production, and hence improved their chances of forming stable unions (No. 58). The railwaymen, the transport workers, hitherto regarded as unskilled and unorganisable, took great steps forward. The miners, a somewhat special case it is true (No. 62), took a huge leap forward with the foundation of the Miners' Federation (now the N.M.U.) in 1888. Now, this blurring of the distinction between the more and the less skilled contributed powerfully to the success of the great Labour upsurge of 1888-93, the "New Unionism," which is the central episode of our period. It was behind that "solidarity" which so struck contemporary observers (Nos. 93, 94). It was to recreate the Labour Movement as a class, and not a sectional movement, and found its clearest expression in the work of the Trades Councils (Nos. 79, 87).

But while the dividing lines between the various strata of the workers were, in places, shifting or being rubbed out, that between the artisan and the capitalist was becoming much more sharp; the latter was ceasing to be the working head of a smallish provincial firm, and becoming rather the *rentier* shareholder, or financier, or London city man, hobnobbing with Court and landed aristocracy. It should be borne in mind that these trends were, at best, only strong enough slightly to overbalance the smugness of the old artisans—to secure the steady drift of the T.U.C. into alliance with the Socialists, but not yet any fundamental change of political opinion on the part of most skilled men or their leaders.

Very little of this had as yet emerged by the 1880s. It was not until after 1888 that the new factors forced their way into daylight in the formidable explosions of the New Unionism (Part Four); though they had been gradually accumulating force, as can be seen from the activities of the working-class Radicals (Part Two) and from the discontent within older unions (Part Four, A). As it turned out, the impetus of the New Unionism, and its various independent Labour movements, could not be maintained. It succeeded in creating and holding some

stable unions of hitherto unorganisable workers; it laid the foundations of that alliance between Socialism and the unions from which our present movement has sprung; but it was only the next great labour upheaval of 1910-14 which made the new unions—railway, transport, etc.—into the key forces which we know to-day.

On the employers' side of the battle, the 1880s had been a time of alarms and excursions, for business-men had been made acutely anxious by the Great Depression—both about foreign competition and Socialism. The serene confidence of the British middle class was temporarily shaken, and all sorts of movements of change, protectionist, imperialist, monetary, social-reformist, semi-religious, made considerable headway. This temporary hesitation on the part of the rulers contributed to the initial success of the labour advance. However, as business improved, and the threat to British capitalism did not appear as immediate as in the 'eighties, confidence returned, until the end of the Depression saw imperialism and jingoism in full swing. With it, opinion towards labour hardened (as in the U.S.A. in our day), and something like a counter-attack developed.

III

In following the outlines of the story indicated in Parts Two to Five, the reader should note that each part is arranged to illustrate the subject matter and is not necessarily in chronological order. Part Six, however, shows the development of the employers' counter-attack in its sequence.

The years 1880-8 were years only broken by rumblings: unemployed troubles, Radical campaigns, mutterings in the unions, and occasional steps forward, as, for instance, one coalfield after another abandons the old unionism of the "sliding scale." 1888-91 were years of astonishing expansion, and saw the foundation of the new general and unskilled unions (Gasworkers', Dockers', General Railwaymen, etc.) without effective resistance by the

employers. While, however, from 1890 onward the employers' resistance hardened, the slackening industrial movement was supplemented by a movement for independent labour politics, which grew out of it (Part Five, A) and the new forces made great headway in the T.U.C. The high tide lasted till about 1894, after that it subsided, though the engineers fought a strong rearguard action in 1896-8 (Nos. 136-8).

In the meantime, the counter-attack gathered strength. It had been directed first against the original champions of the new Unionism, the dockers and the seamen. The Shipping Federation, later followed by other employers' associations, was the spearhead (Nos. 127-30). The attack on the miners ended in a considerable victory (1893, Nos. 131-3), but the pitched battle with the engineers was a victory for the masters. After this the attempts to destroy trade unionism by whittling away its legal basis became more marked. The Taff Vale Judgment, 1901 (No. 140), seemed to have achieved the capitalists' object. Meanwhile the old unionists had recaptured the T.U.C. from the Socialists (1895-9) (Nos. 134-5). But as it became clear that the employers aimed at the destruction of trade unionism as such, the old unions, which had hitherto watched the defeat of the Radicals with satisfaction, drew together with the rebels in a movement of defence which was to produce the Labour Party, 1900 (Nos. 140-2). This period ends with the superficial triumph of the employers, but in reality with the gathering of strength within the Labour Movement and the decisive recapture of the T.U.C. by the new forces.

IV

Our period is marked by the break-up of working-class Liberalism, for up to 1880 practically all politically active workers had been firm supporters of Gladstone, except in certain special regions. Of course this break-up was very far from complete by 1900, and the political development

followed lines similar to those already traced: a rapid advance followed by an apparent recession containing the seeds of future progress (Parts Two, Four, Five, A).

Before 1888-90 there was only the small breakaway from Liberalism, chiefly in London, which produced the Social Democratic Federation (No. 39), the pioneer body of modern British Socialism, and the Socialist League (No. 40). On the whole, however, this was a phenomenon which only touched few people in a few localities. It is doubtful whether before 1888 there were 2,000 organised socialists in the United Kingdom, and certainly at times there were less than 1,000. If we call this the "rebirth of Socialism in Britain"—and we rightly do so—it is because some of this small band conveyed the first elementary teachings of Marxism whilst the band as a whole contained the leaders and the varied forms of inspiration of the subsequent great movements. When the mass movement came, in 1889, Frederick Engels noted that "the people . . . do not know as yet what final aim they are working for. But this dim idea is strongly enough rooted to make them choose *only* openly declared Socialists as their leaders": the slogging work of a handful of isolated men and women was beginning to bear fruit.

The mass movement of 1883-94 naturally increased the number of conscious and organised Socialists. For the first time, with the early Progressive Party in London (Radicalism with a Socialist touch; see No. 112), and above all with Keir Hardie's Independent Labour Party (Nos. 100-2), we can speak of a large-scale swing to the Left in certain regions, though the Progressives soon became an appendix of the Liberals, and the I.L.P. (founded in 1893) is important for what it achieved incidentally rather than for what it set out to do. The onset of imperialist prosperity (1896-1900) cut short the career of the I.L.P. as a potential Socialist mass party of the working class, and, in addition, as a vaguely revolutionary party, for it had started life as such. It continued as a force in local politics, and later succeeded in becoming the kernel of the trade unions' own Labour Party. One of

its achievements was to speed the political transformation of working-class chapel communities (see Nos. 30, 72, *b*, 120). However, most of the intellectual ideas it passed on to the Labour Party were taken from the small Fabian Society, though for a long time the Fabians took little notice of the I.L.P.

As the Labour Movement ebbed, therefore, the "swing to the Left" came to a temporary stop, and even for a time reversed itself. With the exception of two or three years in the early 'nineties, the actual British Socialists before 1900 were not a party, but a growing group of propagandists and leaders, drawn, in those areas in which Liberal Radicalism was beginning to break up, from the more advanced workers (generally the younger ones) and from a few middle-class intellectuals. Of course, their importance was immense. They provided policies and ideas, and trained the vast majority of the leaders of the twentieth-century movement, and while their devoted and often heroic propaganda (Part Five, C) frequently had little tangible result, its long term effect was profound. However, we should remember that, with the exception of a few of the Social-Democrats of the Left, and a very few Fabians on the Right, no Socialists had a clear idea of what they were after, and most confined their theory to moral fervour and a few statistics (Nos. 119, 120). The few Marxists were mostly rather doctrinaire, for the conditions favouring the rise of a class-conscious Socialist party were only gradually coming into force.

Samples of early discussion among the Socialist groups can be studied in Part Three. The strength of Socialism at that time lay in its critique of capitalism, its weakness in its isolation from the actual mass movement, and its "permeation" by young intellectuals uninterested in the workers' power, like the youthful MacDonald (No. 54).

The great feature of the day, however, which brought the more abstract Socialists into touch with the organised workers themselves was the debate forced on both by the realities of the period: the problem of trade unions and the State.

V

For behind the smaller "swing to the Left" of the I.L.P. a larger, slower movement was taking place. The non-Socialist Labour Movement was gradually led, without modifying its original trade unionist aims, to look for their realisation through government action, and not only through bargaining with the employers. It soon found itself fighting political battles. The progress from the attitude of the "old unionist"—essentially the same as that of the capitalist (Nos. 82, 86)—to the new semi-Socialist one (Nos. 83, 84) was fairly rapid: the main stages are marked, in our period, by the formation of the Miner's Federation and its demand for an eight-hour day, and a minimum wage, and by the advance of the associated movements for international action (Part Four, D).

The workers demanding legislation were not, on the whole, converted to Socialism (on the contrary, the miners were the last group to abandon the Liberal Party); they were demanding nothing more ambitious than what the privileged "aristocracy of labour" had already won by old-fashioned trade union effort. But they realised that even the attainment of these modest aims would henceforth involve an increasing amount of political action on a national scale. Even after the subsidence of the great labour wave of 1888-94, this recognition remained, and hastened the drift of the conservative T.U.C. into alliance with the Socialists, and finally into the Labour Party.

Outside the field of trade unionism a similar development was taking place in local government. Labour found it more and more desirable to be represented on school boards, boards of guardians, town councils and the like, as such bodies were looking after an increasing range of subjects which affected the workers' standard of life. This type of labour activity did not suffer from the employers' counter-attack. On the contrary, the stiffening in the employers' attitude rather strengthened the urge for local representation, and it was in the last years of the century that it began to make real headway (Part Six, B).

Of course, this "collectivist" trend in the Labour Movement did not necessarily make for Socialism. The theory which suited it best, and which was, in practice, pretty universally adopted, was Fabian reformism, or little more than advanced reforming Liberalism (Nos. 37, 46, 47). Indeed, after the end of the New Unionism period pretty well all British Socialism, with the partial exception of the Social Democratic Federation, was, for more than a decade, swamped by Fabian gradualism. Even later, when many Socialists rediscovered the class struggle, Fabian gradualism remained the doctrine of the Labour Party, and remains so still, though its inspirers, Bernard Shaw and Sidney and Beatrice Webb, eventually revised their views and declared their faith in Soviet Communism.

We leave the British Labour Movement in 1900, after some ten years of great struggles, preceded by another ten of hard pioneer work. None of the trends we have discussed had yet found full expression. Our period is important for what it promised (or threatened) as much as for what it performed. It promised the possibility of a fighting, class-conscious Socialist workers' movement, such as had been foreshadowed in Chartist days. It threatened continued subservience by the bulk of the Labour Movement to Liberalism, in its newest shape of Fabian reformism. Yet the movement in Britain did advance towards Socialism, though perhaps more slowly and very much more incompletely than some historians have assumed. Perhaps the best way, then, to end this introductory note is to recall the words of Frederick Engels in 1881:

"The link which still binds the British working-class to the English middle class . . . [is] their common working of the national monopoly. That monopoly once destroyed, the British working-class will be compelled to take in hand its own interests, its own salvation, and to make an end of the wages system" (No. 16).

The process was at first retarded by Britain's entry into the period of Imperialism but was later to be accelerated

by the contradictions of the same epoch; slowly Engels' prediction was beginning to be fulfilled.

Note on Selection and Sources

The extracts are drawn from four main types of sources: pamphlets and leaflets; newspaper and periodical files, Socialist and non-Socialist; the important series of official and unofficial surveys and enquiries; and the mass of biographical and memoir literature. The Parliamentary Papers and a good deal of the early fugitive writings are not easy to come by. But anyone who rummages through local libraries, second-hand bookshops, the files of local newspapers and the cupboards of Labour halls, trade union branches, co-operative societies, etc., can discover documentary material quite as representative and important as much that is printed here. (I shall be glad to hear of any discoveries.)

I have tried to avoid quoting too much from standard works available in good public libraries: William Morris's *News from Nowhere* and *A Dream of John Ball*; Morris and Bax's *Socialism, Its Growth and Outcome*; the Webbs' *History of Trade Unionism* and *Industrial Democracy*; *Fabian Essays*; H. M. Hyndman's longer works; Shaw's prefaces and pamphlets; Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People in London*—to name a few. Those who wish to find out more about the period should consult the bibliographies in R. C. K. Ensor's *England, 1870-1914* (Oxford) and Cole and Postgate's *The Common People* (Methuen). The best contemporary guide to books and pamphlets is an early edition of Fabian Tract 29, *What to Read*, in the bound volumes of old Fabian Tracts to be found in many libraries; the book lists and footnotes in the Webbs' great works give a survey of trade union literature. The best contemporary interpretation is to be found in the various letters in the *Selected Correspondence of Marx and Engels*.

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Ben Tillett, *Memories and Reflections* (Messrs. John Long Ltd.); Lord Snell, *Men, Movements and Myself* (Messrs. J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.); J. Clayton, *The Rise and Decline of Socialism, 1884-1924* (Messrs. Faber & Faber); several Fabian publications (The Fabian Society); *W. Morris, Artist and Socialist*, Vol. II (Messrs. Basil Blackwell & Mott Ltd., Oxford); *The Life of Sir James Sexton, Agitator* (Messrs. Cotterill & Cromb); R. Smillie, *My Life for Labour* (Messrs. Mills & Boon Ltd.); W. Collinson, *Apostle of Free Labour* (Messrs. Hurst & Blackett Ltd.).

Part One

OLD UNIONS: SOME ARISTOCRATS OF LABOUR

1. AN INDIVIDUALIST

Henry Allen, carpenter, formerly jeweller, from Birmingham: President of the Ebenezer Sick Society, Secretary of the Working Jewellers' Trade Society, Birmingham City Councillor, gives evidence on poverty, expressing the attitude of mid-Victorian individualism towards the poorer classes. Royal Commission on The Aged Poor, 1895, Evidence,

16,545-9

WELL, I divide [the working class] into three . . . classes. In the first place I should place the better educated and skilled artizans, who very rarely at the end of their lives come to need assistance in any shape, usually providing for themself in societies or by a little saving. . . .

Then your next division?—Would be a class of men who, while very honest and anxious to do well, yet from deficiency of education and perhaps some lack of moral strength and courage, which is a good deal to be accounted for by their associations in early life, I think would not be able to hold their own so well towards the end of their life. . . .

Would you include among those men, who otherwise are honest and fairly industrious, those who spent too large a part of their income upon self-indulgence?—No; that I should call criminal. The deficiency in such men would be lack of moral force and prudence, resulting more from an intellectual deficiency than anything; not being equal to the first class of men.

Then how would you define your third class?—Well, they are the produce of the street-corner; loafers I should call them, who in early life have not been under parental control . . . they are never put to trades, rarely go to school until by-and-bye they gradually grow up into young men that stand about street corners, picking up odd jobs.

2. CRAFTSMAN AND LABOURER IN SHIPBUILDING

From the Report of *Industrial Remuneration Conference*, 1885, p. 114. The reference at the end is to the Boiler Makers' and Iron Ship Builders' Society. See Nos. 3, 9.

MR. J. LYNCH: The system I speak of is one of mixed piecework for platers and time-work for helpers, both being engaged . . . on the same work. . . . It will be easily understood how a helper who has no special incentive to exertion is made to keep up with the plater who has such an incentive, and I need hardly say that the means by which this is accomplished are demoralising to both plater and helper. They are nominally fellow-workmen, but they are actually taskmaster and serf. . . .

The shipbuilders will not move in favour of the helpers, and the platers will not voluntarily relinquish their unjust privileges. There is not the smallest chance, at least in this generation, of the helpers being able to conquer justice for themselves. . . . I know of no way to remedy the helpers' grievances except legislation.

Hitherto all remonstrances addressed to the Platers' Society have proved fruitless.

3. DIVISIONS WITHIN THE WORKING CLASS

From the evidence of Robert Knight before the Royal Commission on Labour 1893-4, XXXII, [6894-VII] Group A, Evidence, 20,801-10. Knight, General Secretary of the Boiler Makers' and Iron Ship Builders' Society, was the grand old man of craft unionism.

THERE are certain divergences of interest between the members of your Union and the members of the Tyneside Labour Union?—There ought not to be if we could only get the labourers to keep their places. . . .

You mean that there is insubordination?—I mean the plater is the mechanic and as a matter of course the helper ought to be subservient and do as the mechanic tells him.

The plater stands, to some extent, in the position of the employer of the helper?—To some extent, although our people do not want to pay them.

Then there is a cleavage of interests as between the skilled workman and the employer, and there is a corresponding cleavage of interests as between the unskilled and the skilled workmen?—Yes.

You would not allow, I understand, a Tyneside labourer, however skilful he might be, to become a member of your Union if he had not served a certain number of years apprenticeship?—We have never had a case where they have applied. . . .

You would not allow them to do your work? . . . We believe in the old adage of the shoemaker sticking to his last.

Yes, but if you carry that principle very far you would separate the working class into cast-iron divisions and it would be impossible for a man to pass over from the class to which he belonged to another class. Do you think that would be desirable?—I do not think that it would be desirable for a man of one class to go to another class. . . .

You think it would be desirable to maintain such an arrangement as would keep a working man in the class to which he originally belonged all his life?—Do you mean that we should be agreeable for a labourer to come and do a mechanic's work?

Provided he was able to do it?—But we have never found that to be so.

4. EXCLUSIVENESS

James Mawdsley, Secretary of the Cottonspinners, reveals that out of every three piecers in a cotton-mill who become qualified as spinners only one is employed. The spinner paid the piecer. Royal Commission on Labour, 1892, XXXV, [6708-VI] Group C Evidence, 789-801. Mawdsley (*d.* 1902) was a leading Tory trade unionist. The questioner is Tom Mann.

. . . EVERY six years a piecer becomes able to do a spinner's work. . . . Then such spinner would train . . . at least three?—Yes, that is so.—And there would be only work

for one of those?—That is so.—What becomes of the other two? . . . The employers have had a splendid selection, and they select the giants . . . in working capacity, as spinners to begin with. . . . The others, the next best, plenty of them drift into miscellaneous occupations, some go as labourers at foundries, some go out hawking, others go in for portering, others in the coal trade—it is the same as in other occupations. And then a certain proportion remain piecers all their lives with an occasional attempt at spinning in case of the sickness of the spinner. . . .

If the piecers wanted to better their position, would your society help them?—That would depend on the circumstances. If they want to better their position at the expense of the spinners, we might object, but if they want to better their position at the expense of the employers, we are quite willing they should do so.

5. SUB-CONTRACTORS

Systems of “sub-contracting” by which skilled workers had a financial interest in keeping the wages of other workers low were not uncommon, especially in old-fashioned trades. The sub-contractor was paid a lump sum for the job and paid all wages out of it. Skilled men on piece rates might thus be working side by side with unskilled men on time rates. Extract from the evidence of William Kerry, a Derbyshire miner. Royal Commission on Labour 1892, XXXIV [6708-IV] Group A, Evidence, 8581-6.

WHAT is your present occupation?—Conveying the coal, as a contractor, from the face to the pitbank.

How is this work done?—Chiefly by boys and young men ranging from about 14 up to 21 years of age.

Are you responsible for the payment of the wages of the boys under your charge?—Yes.

Are those boys deemed to be employed by you or by the colliery company?—The manager, of course, has power to set them on or turn them off; all that I have got to do is to superintend them whilst at work.

And you fix their rate of wages?—Yes. . . .

6. PRICES MUST GOVERN WAGES

The system of pegging wages to prices in obedience to "the laws of supply and demand" ("Sliding Scales") was typical of the acceptance of capitalist assumptions in the union world. It had been fully established among the iron-workers and had conquered many coal-mining districts in the '70s. The "New Unionism" in coal and iron showed itself in revolts against the Sliding Scale, and the demand for a minimum wage instead (Nos. 62, 63). The Dalton and District United Workmen's Association (Lancashire iron-ore miners) reporting, at the height of the new movement on the years 1888-92, is very much on the defensive. From the Report of the Executive, 1893, p. 6.

WHAT then have we succeeded in doing during the four and a half years of our existence? In the first place we have succeeded in disproving a pernicious and almost accepted doctrine that "Unions are good for nothing except strikes!" Notwithstanding that we have been passing through a period when striking seems to have been a craze, we have never had recourse to a single strike! . . .

What have we done with relation to the regulation of wages? This, as before stated, was a primary difficulty, and it was one with which we experienced no small amount of trouble, but eventually we were able to be instrumental in effecting an arrangement, with, perhaps, the most influential company in the district [Furness, Lancs.], whereby wages could be regulated according to the ebb and flow of the Iron Markets; an arrangement which, during the two years it has been in operation, has apparently given mutual satisfaction: Perhaps some of our critics may be ready to say—"No doubt it WILL have given satisfaction to the employers, because it has been reducing wages all the time!" But we do not forget that such an outcome is the fault of the MARKETS and not of the ARRANGEMENT. And we have faith to believe that it will give equal satisfaction, when trade revives so as to allow the arrangement to work in the opposite direction.

7. HOUSE DECORATORS ON THE STATE OF TRADE

From the monthly Trade Circular of Amalgamated Society of House Decorators and Painters, February, 1881. Reports "On the State of Trade" were intended to assist members of craft unions to find jobs when their own town was slack. The small size of the union is typical of the low degree of organisation in many of the building trades.

<i>Branch</i>	<i>Number of members in branch</i>	<i>State of trade</i>	<i>Members total on sick pay</i>
1. Bristol, Gloucs.	40	Very dull	2
2. Birmingham, Warwick	16	Very bad	1
3. Exeter, Devonshire	3	Very bad	—
4. Eastbourne, Sussex	26	Improving	—
5. Hastings, Sussex	53	Bad	—
6. Belgrave, Midx.	18	Dull	1
7. Chelsea, Midx.	34	Moderate	—
8. Croydon, Surrey	14	Bad	—
9. Camberwell, Surrey	33	Dull	—
10. Hanover Square, Midx.	81	Moderate	2
11. Kensington, Midx.	18	Good	—
12. Mid-Surrey, Surrey	20	Dull	2
13. Notting Hill, Midx.	14	Dull	—
14. Paddington, Midx.	68	Dull	2
15. Rathbone, Middlesex	49	Dull	1
16. Stepney, Middlesex	56	Moderate	1
17. Wimbledon, Surrey	10	Dull	1
18. Newport, Monmouths.	31	Bad	1
19. Portsmouth, Hants.	20	No Return	—
20. Plymouth, Devonshire	54	Very dull	—
21. Southampton, Hants.	49	Dull	—
22. Swansea, Glamorgan	40	Very bad	2
23. Tunbridge Wells, Kent	27	No Return	—
24. Winchester, Hants.	5	No Return	—
25. Weston-super-Mare, Som.	14	Bad	—
	<hr/> 793		<hr/> 15

8. OUTLOOK OF WOODWORKERS

The following extracts, from the Monthly Reports of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners (now the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers), 1888-9, illustrate the self-centred attitude of the old craft unions. For the A.S.C.J., a leading building trade union, see Vol. II of this series. *a*) refers to the Bill which became the Technical Education Act, 1889; *b*) from the Address of the General Secretary, October, 1889, refers to the Dock Strike (Nos. 68-71).

a) THE Pimlico branch requests the E.C. to use all their influence with the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress to . . . give their unquestioned opposition to the passing of the proposed Technical Education Act in its present form, and specially to oppose that clause of the Bill which directs . . . municipal bodies to provide out of the public money for the supply of rooms, tools, materials and teachers for the teaching of the wood working trades. That in the opinion of this branch the passing of this clause will be subversive of the best interests of both trade unions and the community. That it will upset the apprenticeship system, and . . . give a bias to the minds of boys in favour of entering this trade, thus further and unnecessarily increasing the numbers. . . .

b) The great strike of dock labourers which, during the past month, absorbed almost the whole attention of the public, caused us serious anxiety, fearing it should interfere with the progress of work in which our members are engaged in the . . . yards on the Thames, many of whom were being locked out in consequence of the stoppage of business caused thereby. We are however pleased to state that this stoppage was only of short duration. . . .

At West Hartlepool and Middlesborough one of the most successful movements for an advance of wages . . . terminated on the 10th of September. . . . And were it not for the fact that one firm resisted until the men were withdrawn there would not have been a single incident to record, calculated to mar, in any way, the good feeling existing between the employers and employees in that

district. The advance gained is 1s. 6d. per week . . . thus bringing the wages up to the amount paid 14 years ago.

9. BOILERMAKERS AND "GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENTS"

The boilermakers under Robert Knight were the extreme type of a union built on "harmony of labour and capital"; they spent an average of 3½ per cent. of their funds on trade disputes, 1880-90. The three extracts below are from Knight's evidence at the Royal Commission on Labour, 1893-94, XXXII [6894-VII], Group A: a) 20,698; b) 20,718; c) 20769. As the Boiler Makers' and Iron Ship Builders' Society was powerfully organised any threat of expulsion was serious.

a) A MARKED improvement has taken place amongst employers of labour in their treatment of trade organisations. In most cases employers now recognise trade unions. . . . It is assumed by many that capital and labour, instead of being invaluable allies, are irreconcilable enemies, and the more that can be extracted from the one, the better it is for the other. This is a great mistake, and one-sided views of this kind are very dangerous, as it tends to produce and keep up feelings of alienation, if not hostility, between classes whose agreement is important, equally for the interest of both employers and workmen and for the peace of society. . . . There is so much in common between the employers and ourselves that we should remove everything that would cause an expenditure of their capital and our hard-earned money, especially when we find they are anxious to deal fairly with us.

b) When the wages are fixed between your Society and the employers, what action is taken by you if your members strike contrary to arrangement? . . . [This seldom happened.] We had a case at Hartlepool a short time since, where a vessel was in for repairing and the men knew the vessel was in a hurry and thought there was a very good chance to get an advance in their wages, so they went to their foreman and made a demand for a

2s. a week advance. The foreman, knowing the arrangement between our Association and the Employers' Association, refused to give the advance and at once wired to me at Newcastle, and by the orders of the council I sent back to say that the employer was to give the men the advance as asked for, and we at once sent to the firm requesting the firm to tell us the amount of money they had paid to the men as advances of wages on that job. . . . As soon as that was done our council ordered the members who had received the money to refund that again to the Society, and we sent a cheque from the head office to that firm equal in amount to the advances given.

c) There was one of our men took a contract to build two boilers at the Isle of Wight, and the man could have done it well if he had only taken time about it; but he hurried over the work and did not make a good job of it, and the firm sent to us and complained that the man had not done his work to their satisfaction. We at once deputed one of our agents here in London to go to the Isle of Wight—an efficient man—to inspect the work at the firm. . . . His report came back to us that the firm were quite justified in the complaint and . . . that he thought £5 would cover it. Our council decided to compel the man to pay £5 into the Society, and they sent a cheque . . . to the firm . . . for the £5.

10. AGAINST TRADES UNIONS IN POLITICS

The old unionist view put by Sidney and Beatrice Webb,
Industrial Democracy, 1897. 1902 Edition, pp. 271-2.

THE Trade Union Congress is a federation for obtaining, by Parliamentary action, not social reform generally, but the particular measures desired by its constituent Trade Unions. . . . On many important subjects . . . they are united. . . . But directly the Congress diverges from its narrow Trade Union function, and expresses any opinion, either on general social reforms or party politics, it is bound to alienate whole sections of its constituents. The

Trade Unions join the Congress for the promotion of a Parliamentary policy desired, not merely by a majority, but by all of them; and it is a violation of the implied contract between them to use the political force, towards the creation of which all are contributing, for the purpose of any particular political party. The Trade Unionists of Northumberland and Durham are predominantly Liberal. Those of Lancashire are largely Conservative. Those of Yorkshire and London, again, are deeply impregnated with Socialism. If the Congress adopts the Shibboleths or supports the general policy of any of the three parties . . . its influence is at once destroyed. The history of the Trade Union Congress during the last twenty years emphatically confirms this view. Whether it is "captured" by the Liberals (as in 1878-85) or by the Socialists (as in 1893-94); whether it is pledged to Peasant Proprietorship or to Land Nationalisation; whether it declares in favour of Bimetallism or the "Nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange," it equally destroys its capacity for performing its proper work, and provokes a reaction which nullifies its political influence.

11. INDUSTRIAL PEACE

From an editorial with this title in *The Trade Unionist* (an organ of conservative union circles), February, 1899.

THOUGHTFUL Trade Unionists have long entertained the conviction that strikes and lock-outs are barbarous methods of settling disputes, and recent events have strengthened this belief. . . . Industrial war is now such a disastrous affair that instinctively its very magnitude and possibilities for evil suggest the imperative necessity of preventing it. . . .

But this mutual apprehension is not the only factor likely to make for peace. There is a growing feeling that the keenness of competition with other nations leaves no margin for the frightful waste resulting from constant and protracted stoppages. . . . Trade Union leaders see that

British industry has arrived at a stage when its present position can only be held by the intelligent co-operation of all concerned. . . .

Many other things are also required, and an alteration in the very basis of industry in the direction of co-partnership seems to many of us a natural development. . . .

Organised workmen have everything to gain and nothing to lose by universal Conciliation Boards in all industries or districts.

We are aware that there are those who will laugh to scorn the idea of seeking to reconcile the interests of capital and labour, which they represent as having the same relation to each other as the wolf and the lamb. . . .

Trade Unionism is of to-day and is concerned with the betterment of labour at each stage. Surely its immediate duty is to secure for it the recognition due to a partner, and outside purely distinctive co-partnership workshops, nowhere is this so fully secured as in a properly constituted Conciliation Board, where capital and labour speak collectively and on an equal footing.

12. CO-OPERATION: TRADE UNIONS AND CO-OPS

There was much friction between the co-ops and their employees, who formed a union in 1891 to try to improve their bad conditions. The co-ops were politically the most conservative section of the movement at this time, entirely concerned with trade matters. The extract is from a speech by the General Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, fraternal delegate to the Co-operative Congress from the T.U.C., *Daily Chronicle*, May 26th, 1896.

MR. E. HARFORD . . . said that the time had come when the working classes were beginning to see that trade unionism and co-operation were the two factors which would raise them in the social scale. The only difficulty arose from the fact that working men as a rule made very . . . exacting masters. He knew this from his own experience as a trade union secretary. He hoped that the servants

of the co-operative societies had a happier time. The little differences which existed a few years ago between co-operators and trade unionists had now almost disappeared. . . .

13. TO IMPROVE THE CO-OPS, 1898

W. Inskip, Secretary of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives, a noted co-operator, writing in the *Trade Unionist*, October, 1898.

I AM also of opinion that co-operative societies should make it a *sine qua non* to employ none but Trade Unionists in their productive concerns.

Further, I am of opinion that co-operators should hold out better inducements to workmen to become both shareholders and competent producers, thereby enabling the Co-operative Societies to go into the market and to compete more successfully than hitherto with the private trader. . . .

On the other hand, the Trade Unionists should help the unity of the two forces by becoming shareholders and purchasers in distributive co-operative societies. . . .

Trade Unionists should also consider the advisability of investing some of their accumulated funds in productive societies. . . .

In times of dispute, Co-operative Societies with spare capital . . . should be prepared to assist Trade Unions to maintain their position . . . by loans, etc., which should be spent at the stores and could be advanced by tickets to be repaid without interest after the settlement of the dispute.

14. MIDLAND MINERS AND CO-OPS

From the *Daily Chronicle*, July 28th, 1893. See also Nos. 151-3.

I AM more than ever struck with the character of the miners in these districts. Methodism of various kinds is very strong, and it is a remarkable fact that nearly all the members of the council of the Derbyshire Miners' Association

are either local preachers or class leaders. . . . The Nottinghamshire miners have an association which is quite equal in point of organisation to Yorkshire or Derbyshire. Practically every miner in the county is a member of it, to the number of something over 20,000. . . . At Hucknall Torkard, where there are three large collieries, the men are great co-operators, holding all the shares themselves, and providing themselves with the best of everything at the lowest price. They have also put in force the Allotments Act . . . and nearly every man has his bit of highly cultivated ground. . . .

15. CO-OPERATIVE PRODUCTION

From *The Co-operative Movement*, 1891, p. 167, by Beatrice Potter. In this book, published before her marriage to Sidney Webb, the author argued that co-operative production on the lines of Owen or the Christian Socialists was impossible, but that great potentialities were open to the democratic consumers' co-operative movement that had developed since 1844.

It has been from no lack of intelligence and self-sacrifice that the Christian Socialists and their followers have failed to realise the ideal of a "brotherhood of workers." . . . From the first they ignored exactly those facts which Robert Owen realised; they overlooked the fundamental changes brought about by the industrial revolution, increasing return from the use of large capitals, the elaborate discipline of the factory system, the skilled intelligence needful for securing a market under the stress of competition. . . . To solve the industrial question of to-day by eliminating the *entrepreneur* and transforming groups of producers into their own masters, belongs to the same category of opinions as the attempt to settle the land question by creating a body of peasant proprietors. . . . The state of society in which the individual producer owns alike the instrument and the product of his own labour is past praying for. . . . Thus the problem before the workers is to regain collectively what they have lost as individuals.

Part Two

FROM RADICALISM TO SOCIALISM

16. ENGELS PREDICTS THE REBIRTH OF SOCIALISM

Labour Standard, June 18th, 1881. Engels' series of articles in the journal of the London Trades Council, 1881, was discontinued as too advanced for the leaders of the movement, but not before affecting some younger trade unionists (cf. No. 28). The articles have been reprinted under the title *The British Labour Movement*, by Frederick Engels.

THE fact cannot be shirked that England's industrial monopoly is fast on the wane. If the "enlightened" middle class think it their interest to hush it up, let the working class boldly look it in the face, for it interests them more than even their "betters." These may for a long time yet remain the bankers and money-lenders of the world, as the Venetians and Dutch in their decay have done before them. But what is to become of the "hands" when England's immense export trade begins to shrink down every year instead of expanding? If the removal of the iron ship building trade from the Thames to the Clyde was sufficient to reduce the whole East-End of London to chronic pauperism, what will the virtual removal of all the staple trades of England across the Atlantic do for England?

It will do one great thing: it will break the last link which still binds the English working-class to the English middle class. This link was their common working of a national monopoly. That monopoly once destroyed, the British working-class will be compelled to take in hand its own interests, its own salvation, and to make an end of the wages system. Let us hope it will not wait until then.

A) *Radicalism*17. RADICAL OPINION: FROM THE *STAR*, 1888

These resolutions from the *Star*, January and February, 1888, are examples of London Radical preoccupations. The *Star* (first published January, 1888) began as an organ of Left Radicalism, not unsympathetic to socialists. a) Wilfrid Blunt (1840-1922), squire, poet, traveller and anti-imperialist, was imprisoned in Ireland for his activities in defence of the Land League. c) "Home Rule for London" (see No. 112). d) (see No. 23). e) Father M'Fadden had been arrested in the Home Rule struggles.

a) THE *Hatcham Liberal Club* views with indignation the barbarous and inhuman treatment of Mr. Wilfrid Blunt and deeply sympathises with his heroic conduct in fearlessly standing up for the right of free speech. (January 24th, 1888.)

b) The *Plaistow Working Men's Club* are going to give what help they can to the United Committee for Advocating the Taxation of Ground Rents "to bring to an end that phase of landlordism which is so detrimental to the best interests of the tradesmen and working men of London." (*Ibid.*)

c) The *Eleusis Club, Chelsea*, has resolved to "support no candidate who will not pledge himself to vote for Home Rule for Ireland on the lines of Mr. Gladstone and for Home Rule for London under one municipality. . . ." (*Ibid.*)

d) In a resolution of sympathy with Burns and Graham [standing trial for their part in "Bloody Sunday," Trafalgar Square] the London Centre of the Welsh Land and Labour League strongly protest against "the infamous and inhuman action of the present Tory government." (January 26th, 1888.)

e) The *Kingsland Branch of the Irish National League* denounces the government for tearing the amiable and inoffensive Father M'Fadden from his poor flock in the hour of their greatest need, and heartily applauds the noble courage of the patriotic priest. (January 31st, 1888.)

f) The *North West Ham Radical Club* earnestly entreats Parliament to grant an inquiry into the action of the police and trusts that Parliament will establish beyond dispute the right of public meeting in Trafalgar Square. A similar resolution was passed by a large meeting of *Secularists*. . . . (February 7th, 1888.)

18. TORY IMPERIALISM

From *Reynolds's Newspaper*, March 14th, 1880. *Reynolds's* is the most typical Radical newspaper of our period; this extract gives an example of the old-fashioned anti-imperialism, widespread in the Liberal Party, attributing war and empire to aristocratic machinations.

LET the working classes note that it is upon imperial policy that the Premier bases his appeal to the people. Ameers and kings have been deposed and sent into captivity; thousands of their subjects have been slain; peace, order and prosperity, such as is known to barbaric peoples, have been destroyed by England which was once "the classic mother of liberty." Every word in Lord Beaconsfield's address is full of the pompous declaration of warlike purposes. He breathes threatenings of slaughter. Approve his policy in the past and he will give to the Czar of Russia the opportunity he longs for—a foreign war. . . .

How many extra millions are we to pay beyond what we have been told for gunpowder?—And how many millions are to be drawn from us to pay for glory? The old aristocratic brain is at work in our midst. The Crown seeks for a new lease in a blaze of military pomp, and in the exercise of prerogatives. The feudal hereditary aristocracy see in an imperial system of government a means to perpetuate their power, and to reduce to slavery the people who live by labour.

19. BRADLAUGH AND PARLIAMENT

The noted secularist, republican and Radical, Charles Bradlaugh (1833-91), was elected M.P. for Northampton in 1880. He was excluded from Parliament on the ground that as an atheist he could not affirm and his oath was invalid; though four times re-elected he was only admitted in 1886 after a furious clerical and Tory campaign in Parliament, and a series of Radical campaigns in his favour outside. Just before his death he was fully rehabilitated by Parliament; his Affirmation Act was passed in 1889. As Socialism grew stronger, Bradlaugh and other old-style Radicals became its chief platform opponents and were considered respectable; but not before 1885. The quotation is from *The Annual Register*, 1883, p. 12. For Bradlaugh's influence, see No. 29.

ALTHOUGH the opening of the session was marked by no pageantry or royal procession, the approaches to Westminster were thronged by dense crowds composed not only of idlers and sightseers, but of delegates from several provincial towns, from the various Radical Associations of London and the country who had come to make a demonstration in favour of Mr. Bradlaugh. A platform was erected in Trafalgar Square, from which the following Resolution, proposed by Mr. Sharman, seconded by Mr. Joseph Arch, was put and carried by acclamation: "That this meeting, protesting against the flagrant wrong done by the House of Commons in violation of Northampton's constitutional right, calls upon the government to enforce the law under which Northampton is entitled to the voice and vote of Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, one of its members, three times duly elected, to serve in the present Parliament."

20. RADICALS AND LABOUR: A LEFT RADICAL VIEW

From *The Democrat*, October, 1887. *The Democrat* was edited by William Saunders, Radical M.P., champion of the London County Council, and a noted advocate of land nationalisation; the paper, which was not Socialist, claimed to stand for Land Resumption (i.e. nationalisation), Free Education, Eight Hours' Labour, Taxation Reform, Home Rule, Adult Suffrage, Paid members (of Parliament).

THE *Daily News* had a very unwise article on the decision of the T.U.C. to favour the formation of a new Labour Party in Parliament independent of the two great English parties. "History is eloquent" against it, [it] says, . . . quite ignoring the patent facts in the history of the past seven years alone. For what gave the Parnellites their strength, except precisely this independence of English parties? . . . The vision of the *Daily News* is obscured by blinding devotion to the Liberal Party, which it regards as the panacea for all human ills. It should remember that in the ranks of that great party there are unfortunately not a few who are landlords and capitalists first, and Liberals afterwards. This is what makes a Labour Party an imperative necessity.

21. RADICAL AND SOCIALIST

F. W. Soutter, a well-known working-class Radical, and Harry Quelch, Marxian Socialist, later Editor of *Justice*, the organ of the Social Democratic Federation, conducted a joint struggle against the corrupt Southwark vestry. The letter below is from the *Star*, May 14th, 1888. For the full story, see Soutter's *Recollections of a Labour Pioneer*, 1923.

MR. F. W. SOUTTER, the Hon. Sec. of the Southwark Radical Club, writes:

"The police have interfered with my friend, Mr. Quelch, who is standing as a Radical, Democratic, Labor candidate at the forthcoming Vestry elections. They now assume the right of selecting candidates as well as places of public meeting. This is a challenge which must be at

once taken up. Will you therefore permit me to announce that I have convened a meeting upon the same spot for Tuesday evening, time half past eight. I have informed the police that such meeting will be held. . . .”

22. QUEEN VICTORIA'S JUBILEE, 1887

To a fairly widespread extent, Radicalism had adopted Republican demands in the early '70s, when the best known working-class Republicans were Bradlaugh and Odger (see Vol. II in this series), and when Joseph Chamberlain and Sir Charles Dilke were for a time identified with Republican ideas. The two following extracts are from *The Democrat*: a) July, 1887: b) May, 1887.

a) THE Hull Radical Club has made a strong protest against the expenditure by the Corporation of thirty pounds for the purchase of a casket in which to present an address to the Queen. . . .

[In moving the resolution the speaker said:]

“The progress of the nation had been owing to the indefatigable hard-headedness, skill and industry of the people, to the extension of the franchise and to the spread of education. It would not be honest to their manhood if they stood tamely by and saw funds wasted in trumpery, twaddley show, whilst they had thousands in Hull who scarcely earned sufficient to get food to keep body and soul together. . . .”

b) In the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* appears a suggestion worthy of all attention. This year is the Jubilee of more than a poor woman, it is the jubilee of a great idea. T'is 50 years ago to-day since wor'ing-men of London and certain Liberal members of Parliament met for the purpose of drawing up a Bill embodying Radical ideas, and demanding Radical rights. That Bill was the People's Charter. . . . We cannot afford to let the names of the Chartists be forgotten. They and what they did will be remembered with enthusiasm when men care as little for Queen Victoria as they care for Queen Anne.

23. FREE SPEECH AND "BLOODY SUNDAY"

From 1885 to 1892 the fight for free speech in London was an important means of linking Radicals and Socialists. This fight merged with that for London reform, one of the demands of which was for the control of the Metropolitan police, then as now under the Home Office.

Extract *a*) gives an account from *Reynolds's Newspaper*, November 20th, 1887, of "Bloody Sunday," November 13th, 1887. The Metropolitan Radical Federation had called a demonstration on Trafalgar Square partly to protest against repression in Ireland, partly to assert the right of free speech. This was banned and broken up by the police and a worker was killed in a subsequent protest demonstration. John Burns and Cunninghame Graham, M.P., were sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment for "attacking" the police.

b), from the *Star*, February 3rd, 1888, illustrates the strength of feeling afterwards. The joint Radical-Socialist front, created by organisations like the "Law and Liberty League" and the new *Star* newspaper (January, 1888) later contributed to the Left victory at the first London County Council elections (March, 1889) and to the success of the great upheavals of the London unskilled labourers, 1889-91.

a) SERIOUS RIOT IN LONDON
MONSTER PROCESSIONS TO TRAFALGAR SQUARE
THE POLICE OVERWHELMED
THE GUARDS CALLED OUT
HEAVY FIGHTING

Posters were issued and set up chiefly in the south and east of London, calling on the men of London to attend in their thousands and asserting that "the right to public meeting is denied by the ukase of a military and despotic filibuster. Are you prepared to submit? If not, come in tens of thousands. Preserve your dear bought liberties at all risks."

ON Sunday afternoon (says an eye-witness) I formed one of a knot of persons who had assembled on Clerkenwell-green in response to an invitation from the "London Patriotic Club." . . . The afternoon was cold and cheerless, but before the time announced a considerable number of people had assembled on Clerkenwell-green and many of

them gathered in little crowds to listen to some earnest orator who was denouncing in excited tones and in unmeasured language the action of the authorities with reference to the proposed meeting. . . . Most of those who joined the Clerkenwell contingent had the appearance of being respectable artisans. They were in most cases neatly dressed and they assembled without noise or disorder. . . . Here and there were boys and men hawking green favours about, while others were selling journals of a very advanced political character. . . . At about two o'clock . . . a number of persons crossed the green and ascended a cart, from which they soon proceeded to address the people. . . . Just before three o'clock, other bodies of men came, with banners flying and bands playing, on to the green. They were greeted with loud cheers. I noticed the banners of the East Finsbury Radical Club and of the Clerkenwell branch of the Social Democratic Federation. The banner of the latter association bore the words "Educate, agitate, organize." Shortly after three o'clock, the procession began to form, and by this time, the crowd was a very large one. There were several large flags and banners. . . . There were red flags tied with black crepe, there was a large red flag surmounted by the cap of liberty. . . . When the procession reached the Bloomsbury end of St. Martin's-lane, the police began to disperse it. . . . The police, mounted and on foot, charged in among the people, striking indiscriminately in all directions and causing complete disorder in the ranks of the processionists. I witnessed several cases of injury to men who had been struck on the head and face by the police. . . . In a short time the bands were dispersed and the police had captured the remnants of the banners. . . . The action of the police . . . was received with yells of execration and with groans and hooting. . . .

The contingents from Rotherhithe, Bermondsey and the South-Eastern Division consisted of fully 20,000 persons . . . at four o'clock the processions from Peckham, Bermondsey, Deptford and Battersea made their appearance at the Westminster end of the bridge. . . . Superintendent

Dunlop then gave orders to his men to disperse the assembly. . . . Borne by members of the procession were about 15 banners and for these the police made. . . . During the melee, the police freely used their weapons, and the people, who were armed with iron bars, pokers, gaspipes and short sticks, and even knives, resisted them in a most determined manner. . . . A similar scene was being enacted in the Strand at the corner of Wellington Street. . . .

A minute or so after four o'clock, which was the hour announced for the meeting to take place, six waggonettes, heavily laden with passengers, and having in the leading vehicle a brass band and two red flags, approached the square from Shaftesbury Avenue. Almost at the same instant about one hundred persons crossed from the foot-path in front of Morley's Hotel, as if to enter the square. Mr. J. Cunninghame-Graham, M.P., John Burns, the Socialist, Mrs. Besant, and others were in this group. Sticks were flourished in the air, and a most resolute rush was made to break through the cordon of police, who stood four deep. The crowd had all but succeeded in penetrating through the police ranks when the reserves inside the square rallied to the support of the main body and a score of police troopers charged pell-mell into the fray. Sticks and batons swished through the air, hats went flying. Several arrests were in this instance made by the police, their chief captures being those of Mr. C. Graham, M.P., and Mr. John Burns, who were carried into the middle of the square, and kept in custody there for some little time.

b) A "SPECIAL" RADICAL SECRETARY

A Correspondent writes:

The members of the Lavender Hill (Battersea) Liberal and Radical Association have lately had an unpleasant duty to perform. . . . A rumour obtained circulation that the Secretary of their association was seen parading Trafalgar Square with a badge and a bludgeon. At first no credence was given to this story, but on being taxed

with it, the secretary . . . admitted its truth. A meeting was called and the "gallant special" was brought to book for his conduct and plainly called upon either to resign . . . or else to renounce [the police and all their works]. The result of this little stir is that this gentleman has resigned.

24. UNIONS AND POLITICS IN RURAL BUCKS

From the evidence of the Rev. C. W. Stubbs, in the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, 1884-5, Vol. XXX, Evidence 15,988-9. Joseph Arch founded the Warwickshire Agricultural Labourers Union (later National Agricultural Labourers Union) in 1872 (Vol. II in this series, p. 79). The Reform Act, 1884, first gave the vote to agricultural labourers as a class. Other witnesses in this enquiry disagreed with the Rev. C. W. Stubbs and thought the improvement was merely a little hastened by the agitation.

Do you think that the condition of the labourers in Bucks has improved in the last ten years?—In one sense it has decidedly. Their wages have very much increased; they have gone up from 11s. and 12s. a week to 15s. and 16s.

To what causes do you attribute this increase?—Undoubtedly in the first place to the Joseph Arch agitation, and in the north of the county I should say to the fact that the labourers in the neighbourhood of Buckingham and in the neighbourhood of Aylesbury have a vote. . . . The social condition of those men I should say has decidedly improved within the last ten years, owing to the political education which has been going on, and owing to the fact that it has been the interest of other people to care for these men and to educate them, and to talk to them and go amongst them.

B) *The Irish*

25. THE IRISH INFLUENCE

The importance of the Irish in the British Labour movement was particularly great in this period, as the '80s saw the Irish national movement under Parnell and Davitt reach its peak, and the awakening of the unskilled labourers brought vast numbers of Irish-born or Irish-descended workers into activity within the British Labour Movement. Extract a) is from *The Life of Sir James Sexton, Agitator*, 1936, p. 30; it refers to his childhood in the late '60s, but illustrates the inherited tradition. b) is from H. Llewellyn Smith, "Migration of Labour," in *Trans. Econ. Circle, Nat. Lib. Club*, 1891, Vol. I, pp. 122-3.

a) REBEL INFLUENCES

THE Irish Republican Brotherhood, or Fenian agitation, was spreading rapidly in those days, finding support in every corner of the world where Irishmen had settled, and in England even the Army and the police were to some extent affected. It is not surprising that my father, after the bitter experience of his youth, was immediately attracted to the movement, becoming one of its most enthusiastic adherents.

Its growth was amazing. Recruiting went on night and day; and new members were enrolled at a rate that was almost staggering. I saw a good deal of this side of the Fenian effort. A railway running from Liverpool through St. Helens to the north was being constructed, and the navvies were mostly Irishmen. My grandfather was the "boss ganger" and, young though I was, I often accompanied him and my father when they were doing "missionary work" for the I.R.B., going to the shanties in which the men were housed and hearing the oath administered.

I forget its exact words, but to me it seemed a fearful pledge, with death swift and sure for the man who broke it, and I shuddered as I tried to imagine the fate of the unfortunate man who, chosen by secret ballot to inflict the penalty, should fail to do so.

Members were instructed to join the local volunteer corps for the purpose of becoming efficient in the use of

fire-arms, and therefore all the more valuable when the rebellion came. I believe that hundreds of men acted upon this and that many rifles were purloined from the local armoury and transported, by some mysterious means, to Ireland for secret storage until the day came when they should be wanted for use against their rightful owners.

b) THE IRISH IN THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

The standard of comfort of the Irish labourer is peculiarly inelastic. He is peculiarly attached to custom and tradition, and hence, as a labourer, peculiarly "immobile", using mobility in the wider economic sense. With these characteristics, however, he unites a clannishness which has always made the Irish strong in power of effective combination. Until the recent dock strike the only really well-organised body of labourers in East London was the Stevedores' Union, manned and officered by London Irish; and a very large proportion of the strike committee during the dock strike were of Irish extraction.

26. MICHAEL DAVITT'S AIMS

A split in the Irish nationalist movement followed the withdrawal of Liberal support for the great leader, Parnell (1846-91), after his appearance in a divorce case. Michael Davitt (1846-1906), leader of the Irish revolutionary peasant movement, who, after years of imprisonment, had joined Parnell, now attempted to combine a programme of social demands and national liberation; his paper, *The Labour World* (1890-1), included Irish, Socialist and general information. He made the statement below on founding the Irish Democratic Labour Federation in Cork, 1890; the Federation also advocated co-operation between organised workers of Ireland and Great Britain. Extract *a*) is from *The Sunday World*, April 5th, 1891; *b*) is from *The Labour World*, February 14th, 1891; the Bill referred to in *b*), attempting to amend the law of conspiracy in relation to trade unions, was defeated (January 28th, 1891) by 179 to 143. *c*) is from Sexton, *op. cit.* p. 127.

a) FIRST, to help to obtain national self-government for Ireland; second, to make labour respected; third, to bring

about shorter hours of daily toil; fourth to make the land system such as would advance the interests of labour as well as secure the rights of tenant farmers. . . .

b) [The] weekly meeting [of the West Derby branch of the Irish National League] was held at the room . . . the following resolution was then proposed: "That we believe it to be the duty of all Irish members to support all motions and bills in Parliament for furthering the cause of labour; and we are sorry Mr. Robertson's Bill was not better supported, for it is by voting for such Bills that they will be helping the men by whose aid alone the independence of our country can be attained."

c) When the Parnell crisis split the Irish constitutional movement, I severed myself from it entirely. I think now that I had for some time been ready for a change, and I do not doubt that I myself had been greatly changed by my close contact with the docker and his life. . . .

I was deeply impressed by the writings of Michael Davitt in his new paper, *The Labour World*, and I found others being similarly influenced. . . .

27. THE HARP IN THE DOCK STRIKE

From Ben Tillett's *Memories and Reflections*, 1931, pp. 158-9. H. H. Champion, here referred to, was a leading Socialist whose paper, *The Labour Elector*, was the official organ of the dock strikers; he devoted himself to the movement after resigning his commission in the Army as a protest against Government policy in Egypt.

As a youngster when I was in the Irish movement, I met a docker who was always ebullient in spite of a life that was more downs than ups. He had been starved when work was scarce; he had been boycotted when work was plentiful. At our meetings on Mile End Waste, or at any of the dock centres, he tightly and nervously grasped the staff which at the peak held the Harp of Erin. He stood beside our old dockers' banner, a linen sheet on which

was thickly painted in black the name of our organisation. . . . In all these trials Kelly's soul would quiver with excited resentment, but he never doubted, and offered an example of great courage and patient service. Henry Champion was rabidly anti-Irish, and his influence over John Burns had something to do with Burns' unkindly refusal to allow dear old Kelly to carry the harmless green flag. During the Strike period we had to face hunger, but I saw to it that Kelly was assisted. Although what went to him was barely enough to keep body and soul together, he distributed it among his brethren and actually collapsed and died in the crush and surge of one of our excited meetings. . . . I look back upon his memory as upon that of a martyr. He lived and died for a cause that was greater than any of us realised.

C) *Towards Socialism*

28. FROM RADICALISM TO SOCIALISM

Extract *a*) is by H. W. Lee (1866–1932), a member of the Social Democratic Federation for forty-eight years, Secretary for twenty-eight years, and part author of its history, *Social Democracy in Britain*, 1935. The Irish Coercion Bill referred to enabled the Government to imprison without trial. *b*) is by James Macdonald (1857–1938), tailor, leading Socialist and trade unionist, Secretary of the London Trades Council, 1896–1913. For Engels' articles, see No. 16. Extracts *a*) and *b*) are from *How I Became a Socialist*, 1896, pp. 51, 60.

a) I SUPPOSE I imbibed a certain amount of Radicalism when I was about 9 or 10 years old for an uncle of mine who used to get me to read *Reynolds* to him very often—more often than I liked sometimes. But I was content, in my own small way, with the Liberal Party, until the Coercion Act of 1881 turned me bitterly against Gladstone and I drifted into Republicanism. . . .

b) It was in 1881 that I came to London from Edinburgh. I was a Radical then, that is in so far as I took any

interest in politics at all. I was a very great admirer of Mr. Gladstone and I remember walking round Westminster and thinking what a shame it was to house that grand old man in a dingy building in Downing Street while the Queen had Buckingham Palace at her disposal. . . .

It was in a public house in Tottenham Street that I first made the acquaintance of some of the London Socialists. There was a Scottish Club held there, of which I was a member, and one evening the landlord told us that there was a meeting being held in another room of some of the most red-hot Fenians and dynamiters in England. Some of us were curious to see these fellows and eventually got introduced to them. . . . They were vehemently denouncing the Coercion Bill of the Liberal Government. . . .

We followed up the meetings of these men, and formed a sort of opposition; two of us in particular, a young fellow named Keir and myself. But gradually we found that we were losing ground and then we threw in our lot with the others, and founded the Central Marylebone Democratic Association. . . .

What really attracted me to Socialism was an article by Engels on—well, I forget what the title was, but I know it dealt with wages and how they were affected by supply and demand, which appeared about that time in the *Labour Standard*. . . .

29. THROUGH ATHEISM TO SOCIALISM

H. Snell (1865–1944), after a hard youth as farm-servant, pot-boy, etc., became lecturer and labour propagandist, ending as a Socialist peer, Lord Snell. From his autobiography, *Men, Movements and Myself*, 1938, pp. 29–31.

My astonishment when I first saw and heard an “unbeliever” was . . . intense. . . . He wore a black frock coat and he looked as much like a highly virtuous elder of a non-conformist chapel as any man I have ever seen. . . . I learned that he was a most respectable and respected

citizen [of Nottingham], a confectioner by trade, a leader in the Co-operative movement, a Liberal in politics, and in religious opinion an advanced Unitarian. . . . From him and other lecturers and preachers, I got my first introduction to a new conception of life. . . . [In 1881 he first heard Charles Bradlaugh, whose name, since his contested entry into Parliament (see No. 19) had become a household word]. I was ready to respond to any plausible call to service, and my capitulation to his resounding appeal was immediate. . . . I have never been so influenced by a human personality as I was by Charles Bradlaugh . . . as man, as orator, as leader of unpopular causes and as an incorruptible public figure he was the most imposing human being that I have ever known.

30. FROM CHAPEL TO SOCIALISM

The letter below was sent to the *Clarion*, February 24th, 1894, by "A Band of Primitive Methodist Clarionettes" who also, states the *Clarion*, sent a very liberal subscription to the lock-out fund during the Coal War of 1893. (See Nos. 131-3.) This illustrates the shift of working-class Non-conformism from a Liberal to a Labour Platform.

I NOTICED your Oldham correspondent's remarks about the *Clarion* being cheered in a Primitive Methodist Sunday School, and think he seems rather surprised about it. But if he should be in Huddersfield any Sunday . . . he would hear as hearty praise of it as he does in Oldham. We have a small band of Clarionettes in connexion with our school who are striving to show the practicability of Christianity and Socialism by proving that the foundation of both is: "Do unto others as we would that others should do unto us." It is hard to turn the older people to our way of thinking after they have been brought up to believe everything the parson tells them. . . . Let them look as they please, we believe we are right and shall stand fast to our duty.

31. FROM BIRTH CONTROL TO LAND NATIONALISATION AND SOCIALISM

From Tom Mann, *How I Became a Socialist*, 1896, p. 79. Tom Mann (1856–1941), in this period an outstanding leader of the eight hours' movement, the New Unionism and the Dock Strike, was Secretary of the I.L.P., 1894–7, and later became world-famous. A syndicalist leader in 1910–14, he joined the Communist Party at its foundation, 1920. Was General Secretary, A.E.U., 1920–1. Malthusianism, the theory that population must multiply more rapidly than the means of subsistence, was at this time used to prove that the only way to improve working-class conditions permanently was to practise birth-control. See Vol. II of this series.

My first serious attempt at grappling with the poverty question was whilst I was working as an engineer for the Westinghouse Brake Company at Canal Road, King's Cross (1879–80). A number of my fellow workmen at this place were ardent Malthusians and Trade Unionists of the narrow type; I became an advocate of Malthusian principles, and [we] formed the Marylebone Branch of the Amalgamated [Society of] Engineers. Several of these engineers were exceptionally smart and clever fellows and cornered me in teetotal arguments in an effective fashion. . . . [Later] I went on to Thorneycroft's at Chiswick, and mixed up with a new set, several of whom were relatively very intelligent men; but on the top of Trade Unionism and curtailing the output of families, they laid considerable stress on the necessity for Co-operation. At this time Henry George's book came up. I devoured *Progress and Poverty* and started a society for the discussion of social questions. . . .

I owe *Progress and Poverty* a good deal for enabling me to see the limitations of Malthusianism and some other questions. Fortunately, although I became a stout defender of George's theories for the time, I had no difficulty in seeing the necessity for common ownership of machines and capital as well as land. . . . So it was in this rough and tumble way that I graduated. . . . The S.D.F. were now holding meetings in the parks and elsewhere. I

was 28 years of age and fairly vigorous, anxious to have my innings against the enemy. . . . I was living in Battersea in 1885, and again working at Brotherhoods, at their present shop in Lambeth, so I joined the Battersea branch of the S.D.F. [Social Democratic Federation].

32. ARTIST AND SOCIALIST

William Morris (1834-96), artist, craftsman, poet and revolutionary Socialist, broke with radicalism in 1883 and joined the Democratic Federation, later the Social Democratic Federation. For the Socialist League and other extracts from his writings, see No. 51 etc. The extract below is from *How I Became a Socialist*, first published in *Justice*, June 16th, 1894; republished as a pamphlet, 1896.

APART from the desire to produce beautiful things, the leading passion of my life has been and is hatred of modern civilisation. What shall I say of it now, when the words are put into my mouth, my hope of its destruction—what shall I say of its supplanting by Socialism?

What shall I say concerning its mastery of and its waste of mechanical power, its commonwealth so poor, its enemies of the commonwealth so rich, its stupendous organisation—for the misery of life! Its contempt of simple pleasures which everyone could enjoy but for its folly? Its eyeless vulgarity which has destroyed art, the one certain solace of labour? All this I felt then as now, but I did not then know why it was so. . . . So there I was in for a fine pessimistic end of life, if it had not somehow dawned on me that amidst all this filth of civilisation the seeds of a great change, what we others call Social-Revolution, were beginning to germinate. The whole face of things was changed to me by that discovery, and all I had to do then in order to become a Socialist was to hook myself on to the practical movement, which, as before said, I have tried to do as well as I could.

Part Three

DISCUSSING SOCIALISM

33. WHAT'S WRONG WITH CAPITALISM? OLD-STYLE THEORIES

Besides the growth of Socialism and New Unionism, other types of unrest—chiefly agrarian—arose in the '80s under the double influence of the great agricultural depression (cf. Introduction, p. xiv) and the Irish Land League agitation. Wales and the Scottish Highlands were important centres. The arguments used were sometimes very ancient. Extract *a*) is from the Royal Commission on Land in Wales, 1896, Evidence, 27,029–30; *b*) is from the Industrial Remuneration Conference Report, 1885, p. 66.

a) LAST October I was in Skye, and at that time there was a slight amount of excitement; a farm had been taken, and the crofters said the land belonged to them. It was a small island off Skye, and they would not let the man put his cattle on this little island.

Then really the claim of the people went a good deal beyond what the legislature had conceded? You say they said the land belonged to them; I think that was the phrase you used?—Yes; that is the feeling of the people. You have to go back to the old clan time. They said The MacLeod or The MacPherson or The MacKenzie was their chief, and they had been there always, and they had a right to stop there always. I do not think they would have ignored the chief, they would have certainly given him a great deal of power over them, that no modern landlord would dream of using. But on the other hand they felt themselves that they had a right to the land.

b) *Mr. Brevitt* (Ironfounders). . . . He hoped that in the not too very distant future when Britain's sons and daughters were enfranchised and educated, we should see a noble peasant proprietary built up and gaining an honourable livelihood by cultivating the land. . . .

34. LAND NATIONALISATION AND SINGLE TAX

The fight against landlordism had long been part of Radical policy, and the demand for land nationalisation was a half-way house from Liberalism to Socialism. The American Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* (1879) had a huge circulation in England from 1881. Its solution, the "single tax" on land, was soon abandoned by most, but his criticism of the capitalist system and of "remedies," such as birth-control and emigration, was the decisive influence on most early British Socialists. Henry George (1839-97) toured England in 1882 and 1884. Extract from 1883 ed., pp. 203-4,

233.

Look over the world to-day. In countries the most widely differing—under conditions the most diverse as to government, as to industries, as to tariffs, as to currency—you will find distress among the working classes; but everywhere that you thus find distress and destitution in the midst of wealth, you will find that the land is monopolised; that instead of being treated as the common property of the whole people it is treated as the private property of individuals; that for its use by labour large revenues are extorted from the earnings of labour. Look over the world to-day, comparing different countries with each other, and you will see that it is not the abundance of capital or the productiveness of labour that makes wages high or low; but the extent to which the monopolizers of land can, in rent, levy tribute upon the earnings of labour. . . . As land increases in value, poverty deepens and pauperism appears. In the new settlements, where land is cheap, you will find no beggars and inequalities in condition are very slight. In the great cities, where land is so valuable that it is measured by the foot, you will find the extremes of poverty and luxury. . . .

This, then, is the remedy for the unjust and unequal distribution of wealth apparent in modern civilisation, and for all the evils which flow from it:

We must make the land Common Property.

35. WHAT'S WRONG WITH CAPITALISM? H. M. HYNDMAN EXPLAINS

H. M. Hyndman (1842–1919), founder and leader of the Democratic Federation (1881), which became the Social-Democratic Federation in 1884 (No. 39). From his *England for All* (1881) onwards, Hyndman produced a stream of books and pamphlets explaining and popularising, though often also distorting, Marxism. The value of his writings lay in their explanation of capitalist society and of the basis for scientific Socialism (No. 36), which he repeated from Marx and Engels. But his mechanical assumptions that capitalism would collapse automatically and that “misery” in itself would produce revolution led him to neglect the essential everyday problems of working-class organisation and power. Except in phraseology, his theory became closely akin to Fabian “gradualism” and he denounced the Russian Revolution of 1917 as a “futile attempt to anticipate the evolution of economic and social forms by generations. . . .” His rooted jingoism increasingly drove him into alliance with imperialism. Extract a) is from *The Social Reconstruction of England*, 1884, p. 6; b) is from *Socialism and Slavery*, 1885, p. 11; c) is from *The Coming Revolution in England*, 1884; d) from *Justice*, November 23rd, 1889; e) from a debate between Hyndman and Bradlaugh, *The Eight Hour Movement*, 1890, p. 15.

a) WHAT we have, I repeat, is a class which owns all the means of production, including the land, on the one side. Those who belong to this class, escape, as a body, without any sort of manual labor and live in luxury far in excess of what is beneficial to them. On the other side is a class utterly destitute of the means of production. Those who belong to this class are, therefore, obliged to compete with one another in order to gain the scantiest livelihood, and sell their force of labor for miserable wages to the capitalists who “exploit” it. Hence increasing wealth and deepening poverty, production for profit and not for use, recurring industrial crises consequent upon the socialised system of production and the command by the individual of the whole process of exchange. Authority carried to its extreme limit in the factory, in the workshop, in the mine or the farm: *laissez-faire* allowed full swing in almost every other department of civilised life. Thus the wealthy,

who take care to maintain the strictest discipline where their own immediate gains are concerned, how loudly, in concert with their hangers-on, that freedom of contract is outraged when they in turn are called upon to submit to some sort of regulation in the interests of the mass of mankind. . . .

b) To take a single but very important instance of the way in which our present system works ruin all round. Industrial crises occur more and more frequently in each successive generation. . . . But these crises arise from the very nature of our capitalists system of production. Thus when a period of depression comes to an end, orders flow in from home and foreign customers; each manufacturer is anxious to take advantage of the rising tide of prosperity, and produces as much as he can without any consultation with his fellows or any regard for the future; there is a great demand for labourers in the factories, workshops, shipyards and mines; prices rise all along the line, speculation is rampant; new machines are introduced to economise labour and increase production. All the work is being done by the most thorough social organisation and for manifestly social purposes; the workers are, as it were, dovetailed into one another by that social and mechanical division of labour, as well as by the increasing scale of factory industry. But they have no control whatever over their products when finished. The exchange is carried on solely for the profit of the employing class, who themselves are compelled to compete against one another at high pressure in order to keep their places.

Thus a glut follows and then a depression of trade, when millions of men are out of work all over the world, though ready to give their useful labour in return for food; and the capitalists are unable to employ them because the glut which they themselves have created prevents production at a profit. Here, then, is a manifest and growing antagonism between the social system of production and the individual (or profit-making company) control of exchange.

[*c*) *Reasons why a revolution is likely in England (1884);*]

For here in brief is our present position:

First; In no civilized country in the world is there such a monopoly of the land as in Great Britain.

Second; In no country are capital, machinery and credit so concentrated in the hands of a class.

Third; In no country is there such a complete social separation between classes.

Fourth; In no country is the contrast between the excessive wealth of the few and the grinding poverty of the many so striking.

Fifth; In no country is the machinery of government so entirely in the hands of the non-producing classes, or are the people so cajoled out of voting power and due representation.

Sixth; In no country are the people so dependent for their necessary food on sources of supply thousands of miles away.

Seventh; In no country is it so difficult for a man to rise out of the wage-earning class.

Eighth; In no country in the world is justice so dear, or its administration so completely in the hands of the governing classes who made the laws.

[For these reasons a revolution is likely in England.]

d) A very very few years in any case must bring us to another industrial crisis. . . . That revolt of the form of production against the form of appropriation and exchange, which even Professors of Political Economy are being forced to accept as the cause of such crises, is being prepared for on a huge scale during these days of so-called prosperity. . . . That is why Social Democrats should never cease to point out to the workers that, this very collapse, if they educate themselves and make ready in earnest to make an end to the class war, will enable them to take hold once for all of the great means and instruments of production and transport . . . which will then fall from the incompetent hands of the landlords and capitalists.

e) And further, Mr. Chairman, as a revolutionary Social Democrat I say I know perfectly well this Eight Hour Bill is but a palliative, but it is a valuable one, because we know perfectly well that the introduction of better machinery may possibly bring about a larger accumulation of commodities, which will bring on crises earlier than before. . . .

36. SOCIALISM NO LONGER UTOPIAN

From H. M. Hyndman, *Socialism and Slavery*, 1885, p. 4.

SOCIALISM in fact no longer consists in mere Utopian schemes or attempts to stir up general discontent among the suffering classes; it is no longer represented by men who think they can reach at one bound an almost unattainable happiness for mankind, or round up little oases of loving co-operators amid a desert of anarchical competition; it is a distinct scientific historical theory, based upon political economy and the evolution of society, taking account of the progress due to class struggles in the past, noting carefully the misery and the inevitable antagonism engendered by our present system of production, and following the movement into the future with a view to handling the ever-increasing power of man over nature for the benefit of the whole community, not to pile up wealth for the capitalist class and their dependents. Such a change can, of course, only be brought about by putting an end both to the existing competition for individual or class gain above, and the competition for mere subsistence wages below. Organised co-operation for existence in place of . . . class domination, international friendship in place of national rivalry: these are our aims. Thus the class struggle which we see going on under our eyes, the revolution in the methods of production—steam, machinery, electricity, etc.—which is affecting all classes, appears in the thoughts of men as a conflict between the principles of collectivism and individualism, between the system of public and private property. The changes in

the economical forces below are, in short, reflected in the philosophy and literature of the time. Just in so far as we understand the facts is it possible to help on the change and to influence for the better the surroundings of coming generations. True liberty is the accurate appreciation of necessity.

37. GAS AND WATER SOCIALISM

From *Socialism in England*, by Sidney Webb, 1889, pp.
116-17.

OUR unconscious acceptance of this progressive Socialism is a striking testimony to the change which has come over . . . [this] country. The "practical man", oblivious or contemptuous of any theory of the Social Organism or general principles of social organisation, has been forced by the necessities of the time, into an ever-deepening collectivist channel. Socialism, of course, he still rejects and despises. The Individualist Town Councillor will walk along the municipal pavement, lit by municipal gas and cleansed by municipal brooms with municipal water, and seeing by the municipal clock in the municipal market that he is too early to meet his children coming from the municipal school hard by the county lunatic asylum and municipal hospital, will use the national telegraph system to tell them not to walk through the municipal park but to come by the municipal tramway, to meet him in the municipal reading-room by the municipal art gallery, museum and library, where he intends to consult some of the national publications in order to prepare his next speech in the municipal town hall, in favour of the nationalization of the canals and the increase of the government control over the railway system. "Socialism, sir," he will say, "don't waste the time of a practical man by your fantastic absurdities. Self-help, sir, individual self-help, that's what's made our city what it is."

38. SOCIALISM: THE OLD UNIONIST'S VIEW

James Mawdsley, Secretary of the Cotton-spinners. Industrial Remuneration Conference Report, 1885, p. 160.

WERE it possible at one stroke to adopt the system universally throughout the world, without inflicting injury upon anyone by the change, we should in a generation be precisely where we are to-day. The strong-bodied, the strong-willed and the intelligent portion of the community, backed up by the steady-going members of the rank-and-file, would occupy the influential, and, as a consequence, the remunerative posts, whilst the idle, thriftless and vicious classes would, as at present, fill our gaols and poor-houses. Were it adopted in one country alone, say Great Britain, we should soon be in the position of being a nation of shopkeepers without customers, on account of the immensely increased cost of production. The idea could only be a success when the highest possible ideal of human nature was universally prevalent.

39. SOCIALIST GROUPS: AIMS OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION, 1884

The Democratic Federation, founded in 1881, became the Social Democratic Federation in 1884. Reflecting strongly the influence of Marxism, it was the pioneer of modern Socialism in Britain. The S.D.F., taught by Hyndman (see Note, No. 35), distinguished sharply between its ultimate revolutionary objects (set out below) and the numerous immediate demands it adopted at various times; the latter were called "palliatives" and were not expected to bring Socialism nearer. The S.D.F., despite the sectarian impotence resulting from this attitude towards working-class activities (see No. 90), made its best contribution through the tradition of devoted effort in Socialist propaganda which its members perpetuated (see Nos. 115, 116).

OBJECT:

THE ESTABLISHMENT of a FREE CONDITION of SOCIETY based on the principle of POLITICAL EQUALITY with EQUAL SOCIAL RIGHTS for all and the complete EMANCIPATION OF LABOUR.

PROGRAMME:

1) All OFFICERS or ADMINISTRATORS to be elected by EQUAL DIRECT ADULT SUFFRAGE, and to be paid by the community.

2) LEGISLATION BY THE PEOPLE, in such wise that no project of law shall become legally binding till accepted by the Majority of the People.

3) The ABOLITION of a STANDING ARMY and the ESTABLISHMENT of a NATIONAL CITIZEN FORCE; the PEOPLE to decide on PEACE or WAR.

4) All Education, higher no less than elementary, to be FREE, COMPULSORY, SECULAR and INDUSTRIAL for all alike.

5) The ADMINISTRATION of JUSTICE to be FREE and GRATUITOUS for all Members of Society.

6) The LAND, with all the MINES, RAILWAYS and other MEANS OF TRANSIT to be declared and treated as COLLECTIVE or COMMON PROPERTY.

7) IRELAND and all other parts of the Empire to have LEGISLATIVE INDEPENDENCE.

8) The PRODUCTION OF WEALTH to be regulated by SOCIETY in the common interest of all its Members.

9) The MEANS OF PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION and EXCHANGE to be declared and treated as COLLECTIVE or COMMON PROPERTY.

40. SOCIALIST GROUPS: THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE

The Socialist League broke off from the Social Democratic Federation at the end of 1884, largely because of the personal and political intrigues in which Hyndman was then indulging. Its leading elements at first included William Morris, Eleanor Marx, Edward Aveling, and Ernest Belfort Bax. Morris (see No. 32) edited and financed *The Commonweal*, the organ of the Socialist League until 1890, which contains much of his best theoretical writing. The principle of abstention from Parliamentary agitation (No. 43) and also from trade union work, which Morris at this time favoured, eventually put the League at the mercy of the anarchists, with whom he had never agreed. He withdrew and founded the Hammersmith Socialist Society, 1890. Extracts below are from the original Manifesto of the League, which illustrates Morris's interpretation of Marxism. His later attitude to the immediate class struggle is illustrated by No. 51.

WE come before you as a body advocating the principles of Revolutionary International Socialism; that is, we seek a change in the basis of Society—a change which would destroy the distinctions of classes and nationalities.

As the civilised world is at present constituted there are two classes of Society: the one possessing wealth and the instruments of its production, the other producing wealth by means of those instruments, but only by the leave and for the use of the possessing classes.

These two classes are necessarily in antagonism to one another. . . . The producers or workers are forced to sell their sole possession, the power of labour, on such terms as the possessing class will grant them.

These terms are, that after they have earned enough to keep them in working order, and enable them to beget children to take their places when they are worn out, the surplus of their earnings shall belong to the possessors of property: which bargain is based on the fact that every man's working in a civilised community can produce more than he needs for his own sustenance.

The relation of the possessing class to the working class is the essential basis of the system of producing for a profit, on which our modern Society is founded. . . .

The profit-grinding system is maintained by competition or veiled war, not only between the conflicting classes, but also within the classes themselves: there is always war among the workers for bare subsistence, and among their masters . . . for the share of the profit wrung out of the workers; lastly, there is competition always, and sometimes open war, among the nations of the civilised world for their share of the world market. For now, indeed, all the rivalries of nations have been reduced to this one, a degrading struggle for their share of the spoils of barbarous countries to be used at home for the purpose of increasing the riches of the rich and the poverty of the poor. . . .

What remedy then do we propose? . . .

All the means of the production of wealth—must be declared and treated as the common property of all. Every man will then receive the full value of his labour, without deduction for the profit of a master, and as all will have to work, and the waste now incurred by the pursuit of profit will be at an end, the amount of labour necessary for every individual to perform in order to carry on the essential work of the world will be reduced to something like two or three hours daily; so that every one will have abundant leisure for following intellectual or other pursuits congenial to his nature. . . .

But, moreover, men's social and moral relations would be seriously modified by the gain of economical freedom, and by the collapse of the superstitions, moral and other, which necessarily accompany a state of economical slavery: the test of duty would now rest on the fulfilment of clear and well-defined obligations to the community rather than on the moulding of the individual character and actions to some pre-conceived standard outside social responsibilities. . . .

As to mere politics, Absolutism, Constitutionalism, Republicanism, have all been tried in our day and under our present social system, and all have alike failed in dealing with the real evils of life.

Nor, on the other hand, will certain incomplete schemes of social reform now before the public solve the question.

Co-operation, so-called—that is, competitive co-operation for profit—would merely increase the number of small joint-stock capitalists, under the mask of creating an aristocracy of labour, while it would intensify the severity of labour by its temptations to overwork.

Nationalisation of the land alone, which many earnest and sincere persons are now preaching, would be useless so long as labour was subject to the fleecing of surplus value inevitable under the Capitalist system.

No better solution would be that State Socialism, by whatever name it may be called, whose aim it would be to make concessions to the working class while leaving the present system of capital and wages still in operation: no number of merely administrative changes, until the workers are in possession of all political power, would make any real approach to Socialism.

The Socialist League therefore aims at the realisation of complete Revolutionary Socialism, and well knows that this can never happen in any one country without the help of the workers of all civilisation. For us neither geographical boundaries, nor political history, nor race, make rivals or enemies; for us there are no nations, but only varied masses of workers and friends, whose mutual sympathies are checked or perverted by groups of masters and fleecers whose interest it is to stir up rivalries and hatreds between the dwellers in different lands. . . .

A great change is preparing . . . everything points to the fact that the great commercial system is becoming unmanageable, and is slipping from the grasp of its present rulers.

The one change possible out of all this is Socialism. . . .

To the realisation of this change the Socialist League addresses itself with all earnestness. As a means thereto will do all in its power towards the education of the people in the principles of this great cause, and will strive to organise those who will accept this education, so that when the crisis comes, which the march of events is preparing, there may be a body of men ready to step into their due places and deal with and direct the irresistible movement.

41. SOCIALISM MEANS POLITICS

From *The Political Outlook*, 1886, a lecture by William Morris. *William Morris, Artist and Socialist*, 1934, II, pp. 278 seq.

PEOPLE therefore who hold strong and definite opinions on the relations of men to each other must either belong to some political party or be cowards: I say there are questions of the day that press so strongly on thinking men for solution that they can be evaded only by cowardice: neither can I allow that some of men's dealings can be wholly separated from others so as to escape the sweep of the net political: strong opinions on religion, ethics, economy, science, nay even art and literature (as I myself have found) will at last bring us face to face with the question "what is true society?" If we answer that question rightly and accept all the consequences which flow from that answer we are free in mind at least whatever compulsion may do to our bodies, if we answer it wrongly we are slaves: nor less slaves if we evade it, however proud we may be of our superior education, intelligence and refinement.

Therefore it seems to me that we Socialists must be political in the sense in which I have been using the word: in point of fact it means the same thing as practical, which is a title . . . which I should be slow in claiming as the word has been so terribly misused in these days, and so in political language has come to mean pretty much the same thing as cowardly and evasive. . . .

It is quite necessary . . . to face the position and see what we really are, because there are on the one hand so-called Socialists who are not revolutionary or political at all, and on the other some who are political but with whose policy we cannot agree . . . those . . . would mix with the political parties of the day whose aim is not the destruction of our slave society, but its continuance, and would ally themselves as opportunity serves with one or the other band of those who are their direct enemies in the hope that those enemies can be cajoled or frightened into

doing the Socialist's work and not the Bourgeois'. . . . I think it is a mistake in tactics altogether. When they have got as far as they can, the enemy will still be the enemy and will have to be met directly and in face, and they will have to begin again on the road which the Revolutionary Socialists have been following steadily all the time.

42. THE POLITICAL OUTLOOK, 1886

From the lecture quoted in No. 41, by William Morris.
William Morris, Artist and Socialist, 1934, Vol. II, p. 284.

NOR are they [i.e. all the anti-socialist forces, Liberal and Conservative—ED.] doubtful as to their course of action in trying to realise the Bourgeois ideal. They are prepared to accept any change you please that is merely political but resist, as covertly as possible but also as stiffly, every attempt towards economical freedom: they will not involve the country in war if they can help it, unless the enemy is helpless and his purse worth having; but they must have new markets if it is possible to get them with . . . our present commercial bodyguard: but chiefly and above all it is their business to *spread the middle class*, to give the more energetic part of the working classes every opportunity for bettering themselves, so long as that can be done at the expense of the working-classes themselves, as they neither will nor dare touch the purses of the rich. On their success in creating a new middle class out of the present working-class their tenure of power hangs; if they fail there is nothing for it but Revolution. For they themselves have abolished or will abolish all the old aristocratic checks and safeguards of the constitution, they have but one support, the tremendous power of organised capital and its slave: unintelligent, cowardly selfishness. . . .

This great party . . . of Moderation [a fusion of Liberalism and Toryism—ED.], is our one real enemy: . . . But the forces against them are in their own camp: their own necessities will overthrow them. . . . It is the destiny of the Moderate party to turn into confessed reactionaries.

To sum up: The old parties who between them held the State in their hands and governed in the exclusive interest of the rich classes are broken up. In their place is a political muddle which is in the process of resolving itself into two parties, one sustaining, the other attacking society founded on wage slavery.

43. ABSTENTION FROM PARLIAMENT, 1887

From *William Morris, Artist and Socialist*, 1934, Vol. II, p. 439.

THIS plan [abstention] is founded on the necessity of making the class-struggle clear to the workers, of pointing out to them that while monopoly exists they can only exist as its slaves: so that the Parliament and all other institutions at present existing are maintained for the purpose of upholding this slavery; that their wages are but slaves' rations, and if they were increased tenfold would be nothing more: that while the bourgeois rule lasts they can indeed take part in it, but only on the terms that they shall do nothing to attack the grand edifice of which their slavery is the foundation. Nay more than that: that they are asked to vote and send representatives to Parliament (if "working-men" so much the better) that they may point out what concessions may be necessary for the ruling class to make in order that the slavery of the workers may last on: in a word that to vote for the continuance of their own slavery is all the parliamentary action that they will be allowed to take under the present régime. . . .

44. PARTIAL REFORMS: SOCIALIST LEAGUE VIEW

From *The Labor Leaf*, October, 1886, p. 3 (Organ of the Clerkenwell Branch of the Socialist League).

ARE we to work for anything short of the complete extinction of monopoly? I should say No! Our business is to work steadily in that direction, but if another class of the

community is working for palliative measures, say an eight hours Bill, we cannot oppose them. We may point out that the passing an eight hours Bill would leave the people very little better off than before, and that if they can combine to pass an eight hours Bill and get it passed in spite of the organised opposition of the classes, they can combine to take possession of all the means of production, kick out the employers and produce commodities for themselves and those belonging to them, to use, instead of making commodities for their employers to gamble with, and make a profit on. Socialists must never be seen opposing measures in the direction of Socialism alongside the reactionaries. If they do this the public will think them either idiots or rogues, or perhaps a mixture of both.

45. PARTIAL REFORMS: WILLIAM MORRIS

From *Communism*, by William Morris, 1893, Fabian Tract 113: a) p. 8; b) p. 8; c) p. 11.

a) THE question, then, it seems to me, about all these partial gains . . . is not so much as to what advantage they may be to the public at large in the passing moment, or even to the working people, but rather what effect they will have towards converting the workers to an understanding of, and ardent desire for Socialism; true and complete Socialism I mean, what I should call Communism. For though making a great many poor people, or even a few, somewhat more comfortable than they are now, somewhat less miserable, let us say, is not in itself a light good; yet it would be a heavy evil if it did anything towards dulling the efforts of the whole class of workers towards the winning of a real society of equals. . . . I want to know and to ask you to consider how far the betterment of the working people might go, and yet stop at last without having made any progress on the *direct* road to Communism. Whether in short the tremendous organisation of civilised and commercial society is not playing the cat and mouse game with us socialists. Whether the

Society of Inequality might not accept the quasi-socialist machinery . . . and work it for the purpose of upholding that society in a somewhat shorn condition, maybe, but a safe one. That seems to me possible, and means the other side of the view: instead of the useless classes being swept away by the useful, the useless classes gaining some of the usefulness of the workers, and *so* safeguarding their privilege.

b) The ultimate good . . . the amount of progressive force there might be in . . . [partial reforms] would, I think, depend on *how* such reforms were done; in what spirit; or rather what else was being done, while these were going on, which would make people long for equality of condition; which would give them faith in the possibility and workableness of socialism; which would give them courage to strive for it. . . .

c) There is a danger that they will be looked upon as ends in themselves. Nay, it is certain that the greater number of those who are pushing for them will at the time be able to see no further than them, and will only recognise their temporary character when they have passed beyond them, and are claiming the next thing.

46. SOCIALIST GROUPS: THE FABIAN "BASIS," 1886

The Fabian Society was founded in 1884, but did not become important until 1887-8. Its chief leaders were Sidney Webb, later Lord Passfield (1859-1947), and George Bernard Shaw (*b.* 1857). The statement of principles below was drafted before the Fabians had become wholly identified with extreme reformist Socialism.

THE Fabian Society consists of Socialists.

It therefore aims at the reorganisation of Society by the emancipation of Land and Industrial Capital from individual and class ownership, and the vesting of them in the community for the general benefit. In this way only can the natural and acquired advantages of the country be equitably shared by the whole people.

The Society accordingly works for the extinction of private property in Land and of the consequent individual appropriation, in the form of Rent, of the price paid for permission to use the earth, as well as for the advantages of superior soils and sites.

The Society, further, works for the transfer to the community of the administration of such industrial Capital as can conveniently be managed socially. For, owing to the monopoly of the means of production in the past, industrial inventions and the transformations of surplus income into Capital have mainly enriched the proprietary class, the worker being now dependent on that class for leave to earn a living.

If these measures be carried out, without compensation (though not without such relief to expropriated individuals as may seem fit to the community), Rent and Interest will be added to the reward of labour, the idle class now living on the labour of others will necessarily disappear, and practical equality of opportunity will be maintained by the spontaneous action of economic forces with much less interference with personal liberty than the present system entails.

For the attainment of these ends the Fabian Society looks to the spread of Socialist opinions, and the social and political changes consequent thereon. It seeks to achieve these ends by the general dissemination of knowledge as to the relation between the individual and Society in its economic, ethical, and political aspects.

47. FABIAN POLICY, 1896

The extracts are from the Report on Fabian Policy presented to the Congress of the Second International held in London, 1896 (drafted by G. B. Shaw). Fabian Tract 70.

I

The Mission of the Fabians

THE object of the Fabian Society is to persuade the English people to make their political constitution thoroughly

democratic and so to socialize their industries as to make the livelihood of the people entirely independent of private Capitalism.

The Fabian Society endeavours to pursue its Socialist and Democratic objects with complete singleness of aim. For example:—

It has no distinctive opinions on the Marriage Question, Religion, Art, abstract Economics, historic Evolution, Currency or any other subject than its own special business of practical Democracy and Socialism.

It brings all the pressure and persuasion in its power to bear on existing forces, caring nothing by what name any party calls itself, or what principles, Socialist or other, it professes, but having regard solely to the tendency of its actions, supporting those which make for Socialism and Democracy, and opposing those which are reactionary.

It does not propose that the practical steps towards Social Democracy should be carried out by itself, or by any other specially organized society or party.

It does not ask the English people to join the Fabian Society. . . .

IV

Fabian Constitutionalism

The Fabian Society is perfectly constitutional in its attitude; and its methods are those usual in political life in England.

The Fabian Society accepts the conditions imposed on it by human nature and by the national character and political circumstances of the English people. It sympathizes with the ordinary citizen's desire for gradual, peaceful changes as against revolution, conflict with the army and police, and martyrdom. It recognizes the fact that Social-Democracy is not the whole of the working-class program, and that every separate measure towards the socialisation of industry will have to compete for precedence with numbers of other reforms. It therefore does not believe that the moment will ever come

when the whole of Socialism will be staked on the issue of a single General Election or a single Bill in the House of Commons, as between the proletariat on one side and the proprietariat on the other. Each instalment of Social-Democracy will only be a measure among other measures, and will have to be kept to the front by an energetic Socialist section. The Fabian Society therefore begs those Socialists who are looking forward to a sensational historical crisis, to join some other Society.

XI

Fabians and the Middle Class

In view of the fact that the Socialist movement has been hitherto inspired, instructed, and led by members of the middle class or "bourgeoisie," the Fabian Society, though not at all surprised to find these middle class leaders attacking with much bitterness the narrow social ideals current in their own class, protests against the absurdity of Socialists denouncing the very class from which Socialism has sprung as specially hostile to it. The Fabian Society has no romantic illusions as to the freedom of the proletariat from these same narrow ideals. Like every other Socialist society, it can only educate the people in Socialism by making them conversant with the conclusions of the most enlightened members of all classes. The Fabian Society, therefore, cannot reasonably use the words "bourgeois" or "middle class," as terms of reproach, more especially as it would thereby condemn a large proportion of its own members.

48. WHAT SOCIALISM MEANS: 1893

The manifesto quoted below was jointly drawn up by the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society and the Hammersmith Socialist Society (founded by William Morris in 1890). One of many fruitless attempts at Socialist unity, it was of no practical importance, but serves to give an idea of the measures most Socialists advocated. One might add to these: "extension of powers of local authorities" (S.D.F., Fabians, later I.L.P.), municipalisation of public services (S.D.F., Fabians), housing and slum-clearance. The extract is from "Manifesto of the English Socialists." May 1, 1893, pp. 4-7.

It is, therefore, opportune, to remind the public once more of what Socialism means to those who are working for the transformation of our present unsocialist state into a collectivist republic, and who are entirely free from the illusion that the amelioration or "moralisation" of the conditions of capitalist private property can do away with the necessity for abolishing it. Even those readjustments of industry and administration which are Socialist in form will not be permanently useful unless the whole state is merged into an organised commonwealth. Municipalisation, for instance, can only be accepted as Socialism on the condition of its forming a part of national and at last of international Socialism, in which the workers of all nations, while adopting within the borders of their own countries those methods which are rendered necessary by their historic development, can federate upon a common basis of the collective ownership of the great means and instruments of the creation and distribution of wealth, and thus break down national animosities by the solidarity of human interest throughout the civilised world.

On this point all Socialists agree. Our aim, one and all, is to obtain for the whole community complete ownership and control of the means of transport, the means of manufacture, the mines and the land. Thus we look to put an end for ever to the wage-system, to sweep away all distinctions of class, and eventually to establish national and international communism on a sound basis. . . .

The first step towards transformation and re-organisation must necessarily be in the direction of the limitation of class robbery, and the consequent raising of the standard of life for the individual. In this direction certain measures have been brought within the scope of practical politics. . . . The following are some of the measures spoken of above:—

An Eight Hour Day.

Prohibition of Child Labour for Wages.

Free Maintenance of all Necessitous Children.

Equal Pay for Men and Women for Equal Work.

An Adequate Minimum Wage for all Adults Employed in the Government and Municipal Services, or in any Monopolies such as Railways, enjoying State Privileges.

Suppression of all Subcontracting and Sweating.

Universal Suffrage for all Adults. . . .

Public Payment for Public Service.

49. WHAT WILL SOCIALISM BE LIKE? WEBB

From Sidney Webb, *English Progress Towards Social Democracy*, 1892, Fabian Tract 15, p. 4.

THE abstract word "Socialism" denotes a particular principle of social organisation. We may define this principle either from the constitutional or the economic standpoint. We may either put it as "the control by the community of the means of production for public advantage, instead of private profit", or "the absorption of rent and interest by the community collectively." Its opposite is the abandonment of our means of production to the control of competing private individuals, stimulated by the prospect of securing the rent and interest gratuitously.

But this definition does not satisfy some people. They want a complete description of a Socialist State. . . . Such fancy sketches have, indeed, at times, been thrown off by Socialists as by all other thinkers; but with the growing realisation of social evolution, men gradually cease to

expect the fabrication of a perfect and final social state. . . . There will never come a moment when we can say, "*Now* let us rest, for Socialism is established": any more than we say, "*Now* Radicalism is established." The true principles of social organisation must already have secured partial adoption, as a condition of the continuance of every existing social organism; and the progress of Socialism is but their more complete recognition and their conscious adoption as the lines upon which social improvement advances.

50. WHAT WILL SOCIALISM BE LIKE? MORRIS

Morris gave his fullest picture of an imaginary Socialist life in *News from Nowhere*. He objected to "Socialists" who merely saw in Socialism a sort of prolongation of the values of capitalism without its drawbacks. In this extract from the *Commonweal*, Feb. 18, 1888, he speaks of morals and behaviour.

BUT I do not mean to say that these one-sided Socialists are generally acting disingenuously, or merely trying to smoothe down a hostile audience. I believe, on the contrary, that they do not see except through the murky smoked glass of the present condition of life amongst us; and it seems somewhat strange, not that they should have no vision of the future, but that they should not be ready to admit that it is their own defect that they have not. Surely they must allow that such a stupendous change in the machinery of life as the abolition of capital and wages must bring about a corresponding change in ethics and habits of life; that it would be impossible to desire many things which are now the main objects of desire; needless to guard against many eventualities which we now spend our lives in guarding against; that, in short, we shall burn what we once adored, and adore what we once burned.

Is it conceivable, for instance, that the change for the present wage-earners will simply mean hoisting them up into the life of the present "refined" middle classes, and that the latter will remain pretty much what they are

now, minus their power of living on the labour of others? To my mind it is inconceivable. . . . What! will, e.g., the family of the times when monopoly is dead be still as it is now in the middle classes, framed on the model of that of an affectionate and moral tiger to whom all is prey a few yards from the sanctity of the domestic hearth? Will the body of the woman we love be but an appendage to her property? Shall we try to cram our lightest whim as a holy dogma into our children and be bitterly unhappy when we find that they are growing up to be men and women like ourselves? Will education be a system of cram begun on us when we are four years old, and left off sharply when we are eighteen? Shall we be ashamed of our love and our hunger and our mirth, and believe that it is wicked of us not to try to dispense with the joys that accompany procreation of our species, and the keeping of ourselves alive, those joys of desire which make us understand that the beasts too may be happy? Shall we all, in short, as the "refined" middle classes now do, wear ourselves away in the anxiety to stave off all trouble, emotion, and responsibility in order that we may at last merge all our troubles into one, the trouble that we have been born for nothing but to be afraid to die? All this which is now the life of refined civilisation will be impossible then. . . . We shall not desire and we shall not be able to carry on the feverish and perverted follies of the art and literature of Commercialism.

51. THE DEEPER MEANING OF THE STRUGGLE

Extracts from the letter written by William Morris to the *Daily Chronicle* (November 10, 1893), during the great miners' lock-out (Nos. 131-3). Together with his *News from Nowhere*, embodying some of the lessons of Bloody Sunday (No. 23), and *Socialism, Its Growth and Outcome*, a Marxist study written in conjunction with Belfort Bax (1893), it represents his maturest Socialist thought.

. . . I DO not believe in the possibility of keeping art vigorously alive by the action, however energetic, of a few groups of specially gifted men and their small circle

of admirers amidst a general public incapable of understanding and enjoying their work. I hold firmly to the opinion that all worthy schools of art must be in the future, as they have been in the past, the outcome of the aspirations of the people towards the beauty and true pleasure of life. And further, that now that democracy is building up a new order, which is slowly emerging from the confusion of the commercial period, these aspirations of the people towards beauty can only be born from a condition of practical equality of economical condition amongst the whole population. Lastly, I am so confident that this equality will be gained, that I am prepared to accept as a consequence of the process of that gain, the seeming disappearance of what art is now left us; because I am sure that that will be but a temporary loss, to be followed by a genuine new birth of art, which will be the spontaneous expression of the pleasure of life innate in the whole people. . . .

This, I say, is the art which I look forward to, not as a vague dream, but as a practical certainty, founded on the general well-being of the people. It is true that the blossom of it I shall not see; therefore I may be excused if, in common with other artists, I try to express myself through the art of to-day, which seems to us to be only a survival of the organic art of the past, in which the people shared, whatever the other drawbacks of their condition might have been. . . .

The first step therefore, towards the new birth of art must be a definite rise in the condition of the workers; their livelihood must (to say the least of it) be less niggardly and less precarious, and their hours of labour shorter; and this improvement must be a general one, and confirmed against the chances of the market by legislation. But again this change for the better can only be realised by the efforts of the workers themselves. "By us and not for us" must be their motto. That they are now finding this out for themselves and acting on it makes this year a memorable one indeed, small as is the actual gain which they are claiming. So, Sir, I not only

"admit," but joyfully insist on the fact "that the miners are laying the foundation of something better." The struggle against the terrible power of the profit-grinder is now practically proclaimed by them a matter of principle, and no longer a mere chance-hap business dispute, and though the importance of this is acknowledged here and there, I think it is even yet underrated. For my part I look upon the swift progress towards equality as now certain; what these staunch miners have been doing in the face of such tremendous odds, other workmen can and will do; and when life is easier and fuller of pleasure, people will have time to look around them and find out what they desire in the matter of art, and will also have power to compass their desires. No-one can tell now what form that art will take; but as it is certain that it will not depend on the whim of a few persons, but on the will of all, so it may be hoped that it will at last not lag behind that of past ages but will outgo the art of the past in the degree that life will be more pleasurable from the absence of bygone violence and tyranny, *in spite* and not *because* of which our forefathers produced the wonders of popular art, some few of which time has left us.

52. CLASS WAR NOT WANTED

From a Fabian Society leaflet, *The Lock-Out in the Engineering Trade*, December 29th, 1897. See Nos. 136-8.

THE employers make no secret of their resolution to forcibly sweep away industrial democracy and replace it by the absolute despotism of Capital. . . . Trade Unionists know what that means. But do other citizens know that it means the disorganization of English labour, and the degradation of English home-life; the gradual loss of our high manufacturing character in the markets of the world; the transfer of industrial diplomacy from our public and responsible Trade Union Congress and its Parliamentary Committee to secret organizations; the confirmation of revolutionary doctrines and the spreading of

the revolutionary temper; and the beginning of an embittered class war instead of the give-and-take bargaining between Capital and Labour to which England is accustomed?

We plead for an overwhelming expression of opinion against this disastrous attempt at social disorganization.

53. THE I.L.P. AND CLASS WAR

Though made a few years later than our period, the statement below sums up the view upheld by Keir Hardie from the first and largely adopted by the I.L.P. (No. 102).

From the *Labour Leader*, September, 1904.

I CLAIM for the I.L.P. that its Socialism is above suspicion, and its independence unchallenged and unchallengeable; and yet in the platform speeches and in the writings of its leading advocates the terms "class war" or "class conscious" are rarely if ever used. . . . Socialism offers a platform broad enough for all to stand upon who accept its principles, and fortunately, these are being freely accepted by leaders of thought and opinion whose "class conscious" instincts and interest would lead them into the opposite camp. . . .

Now it is not disputed that there is a conflict of interests between those who own property and those who work for wages. . . . The object of Socialism is the removal of the causes which produce this antagonism, so that the human interest may at all times be the dominant one. The enlightened capitalist will be as anxious to bring this about as the enlightened workman. Both stand to gain from the change. But two points need to be emphasised here: the first is that the conflict of interests is not necessarily a class one; and the second is that the "propertyless proletariat"—to borrow William Morris' phrase—is not a class at all. It is the whole community minus only the propertied parasites who prey upon it.

Let me make these points clear. . . . Capitalism is the product of selfishness, and so long as selfishness . . . continues, the evils of the present system will also remain.

But selfishness is not by any means a monopoly of the rich. . . . When a collier sweats his haulier, the weaver his piecer, the riveter his holder-up, and so on, it is not a "class war" but an internecine strife between workers of the same class which has its root in selfishness. . . . Socialism makes war upon a system, not upon a class. . . .

But the main thought underlying the class war theory is that Socialism is revolutionary, and can only be accomplished by means of a revolution. . . . As a necessary corollary to this, reforms proposed by governments are merely intended to cloak the true nature of the war of classes and meant to secure "the continued existence of bourgeois society." Again I dissent. . . . That Socialism is revolutionary is not in dispute, but that it can only be won by a violent outbreak is in no sense true. Nor do I admit that reforms are made from any such sordid motive. There is a growing social conscience which counts for much in these reforms. . . . I can imagine one reform after another being won until in the end Socialism itself causes no more excitement than did the extinction of landlordism in Ireland a year ago. No revolution can succeed which has not public opinion behind it, and when that opinion ripens, as we have seen over and over again, it breaks down even the walls of self-interest.

54. YOUNG RAMSAY MACDONALD'S VIEW

This extract reflects the current discussion on "evolution" or "revolution." It was written before the possibility of an immediate violent revolution in England had been generally rejected by British Socialists ("Bloody Sunday" in November, 1887, seemed to prove its difficulty); hence the phraseology. From J. Ramsay MacDonald's "A Rock Ahead,"

To-day, March, 1887.

OF course the socialist who sees in every tall hat a traitor, in every respectable outline . . . a money-grabber and in every appeal to reason a bait of the enemy's, will not for the moment allow that the coming revolution is to be directed from the study; to be one, not of brutal need, but

of intellectual development, to be, in fact, a revolution of the comparatively well-to-do. . . . By pandering to all the desires of the very lowest class, we may soon gather round us a mob and just possibly even make a revolution, but the social reconstruction of society will be further removed from us than ever. . . .

[I plead for] stronger efforts in intellectual circles, and vigorous propaganda amongst the thoughtful and reasonable; that thus the "party of physical needs" may be weakened and Socialism may stand forth before the eyes of men, a stage in the process of intellectual development. When we are strong in the strength of intellectual faith, the discontented will still be at our command, and as explosive as ever. We may have to use them, or we may not; but should the worst befall their destructive power will be skilfully directed; it will not cause ruin, but will clear a way; . . . it will be the tool, but not the designer.

Part Four

OLD AND NEW UNIONISM

A) Old Unions under Fire

55. SCOTS MASONS FACE A CRISIS, 1886

From an undated leaflet in the Webb Collection: "To Lodges, Members and Non-Members." This lament is typical of divisions between old and new members in the skilled unions (see also No. 88). The leaflet summarises some of the old campaigns for the nine-hour day, etc., and then continues:

WHY is it with the advanced education from the peer to the peasant, the world is advancing, are the Masons of Scotland retrogressing with the death-gurgle in their throat? Brethren—the reasons are not far to seek. The old blood which relieved us from serfdom are dying away. . . . With ingratitude the younger Members think little of the battles their fathers in the Trade had to fight for them to possess the liberties they now enjoy. 'Tis almost a pity that they spent the heyday of their manhood in clearing the way for the freedom of the young Members when they will not support the cause. . . .

We much regret we have thus so pointedly to draw the attention of the young and lapsed Members to the duty they owe in upholding the principle and freedom they now enjoy, by showing that they appreciate the great battle their fathers fought and won for them, without turning the cold shoulder, and with derisive sneer, ask what good the Masons Association has done for them. To such as ask the question—and it is a pity there are so many at the present day, otherwise the Masons would be in a better position to combat for, and uphold labour to get its legitimate share of the product of capital . . . [we submit the following figures]:

1852-1885

<i>Toward Benevolent Objects</i>				<i>Towards Trade Purposes</i>			
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Sick Allowance	15,929	10	3	Gifts to other trades	1,592	17	6
Funeral Allowance	31,679	0	0	Strikes, Tramp, Re-			
Accident Provision	9,572	8	6	lief	26,231	9	4
Gifts to disabled members	653	0	0				
Relief to Idle mem-					£27,824	6	10
bers	1,297	18	0				
Sick Levies	1,010	0	0				
Superannuation	4,605	2	8				
Emigration Scheme	186	0	0				
	<hr/>						
	£64,932	19	5				

56. TOM MANN CRITICISES THE UNIONS

Tom Mann, *What a Compulsory Eight Hour Day Means to the Workers*, 1886.

NONE of the important societies have any policy other than that of endeavouring to keep wages from falling. The true Unionist policy of *aggression* seems entirely lost sight of; in fact the average unionist of to-day is a man with a fossilised intellect, either hopelessly apathetic, or supporting a policy that plays directly into the hands of the capitalist exploiter. . . . I take my share of the work of the Trade Union to which I belong; but I candidly confess that unless it shows more vigour at the present time, I shall be compelled to take the view—against my will—that to continue to spend time over the ordinary squabble-investigating, do-nothing policy will be an unjustifiable waste of one's energies. I am sure there are thousands of others in my state of mind.

57. JOHN BURNS ON THE OLD UNIONS

John Burns, 1854-1942, engineer, early member of S.D.F., chief Socialist mass orator of the '80s, leader with Tom Mann of the opposition to Old Unionism within its ranks. Elected to London County Council, 1889, Parliament, 1892 (both for Battersea). Broke with Socialism and subsequently (1906-14) became a Liberal Minister. Extract from *Justice*, September 3rd, 1887.

THEIR reckless assumption of the duties and responsibilities that only the State or whole community can discharge, in the nature of sick and superannuation benefits at the instance of the middle class, is crushing out the larger unions by taxing their members to an unbearable extent. This so cripples them that the fear of being unable to discharge their friendly society liabilities often makes them submit to encroachments by the masters without protest. The result of this is that all of them have ceased to be unions for maintaining the rights of Labour, and have degenerated into mere middle and upper-class rate-reducing institutions.

58. OLD AND NEW UNIONISM: JOHN BURNS

John Burns points out the role of technical progress in breaking down old craft barriers and trade union structure. This was especially important among engineers, who were the major old union to go over to the "New Unionism" in the '90s (see No. 88). From *A Speech by John Burns on the Liverpool Congress*, London, 1890, p. 6.

THERE has been a lot of cant talked about the "new" and "old" trade unionism. The difference between them, if any, is entirely due to the fact that the "new" see that labour-saving machinery is reducing the previously skilled to the level of unskilled labour, and they must in their own interests, be less exclusive than hitherto. The "new" believe that distinctions of labour must disappear and that class prejudices that have disintegrated the labour movement must be abolished. Except in tactics, there is no difference between the "new" unionists

of to-day and the pioneers of trade unionism sixty years ago, who, mainly through the efforts of Robert Owen and others, were very socialistic in their principles and action, as is witnessed by the Engineers' Rules.

The men who call themselves the "old" unionists to-day are those who have departed from the genuine unionism of forty or fifty years ago that never hesitated to invoke State interference and in so doing did more for the workers than it could secure by trade union effort.

59. WHAT IS THE USE OF TRADE UNIONS? H. M. HYNDMAN

H. M. Hyndman, *The Historical Basis of Socialism*, 1883,
pp. 287, 291.

POWERFUL as the Trade Unions have been, and, indeed, to a certain extent still are, Trade Unionists are, all told, but a small fraction of the total working population. They constitute in fact, an aristocracy of labour who, in view of the bitter struggle now drawing nearer and nearer, cannot be said to be other than a hindrance to that complete organisation of the proletariat which alone can obtain for the workers their proper control over their own labour. . . . Being also fundamentally unsectarian and unpolitical, they prevent any organised attempt being made by the workers as a class to form a definite party of their own. . . .

The waste of the Trade Union funds on strikes or petty benefits to the individuals who compose them is still more deplorable. Enormous sums have been . . . lost, directly, or indirectly, in consequence of strikes which, if applied by Unionists to active propaganda against the existing system . . . would long since have produced a serious effect.

60. WHAT IS THE USE OF TRADE UNIONS? SIDNEY WEBB

Sidney Webb in *English Progress towards Social Democracy*.
Fabian Tract No. 15, 1892, p. 8.

THE belief in universal Trades Unionism as a means of greatly and permanently raising wages all round must be at once dismissed. . . . Certainly, the workers in some trades have managed to improve their economic position by strict Trade Unions. . . . But those who merely counsel the rest to go and do likewise forget that the only permanently effective Trade Union victories are won by limitation of the numbers in the particular trade, and the excluded candidates necessarily go to depress the condition of the outsiders. The Trade Unionist can usually only raise himself on the bodies of his less fortunate comrades. . . .

B) Rise and Growth of New Unionism

61. BRADFORD WEAVERS

Trade unionism in the wool trade as a whole remained insignificant until the "New Unionism." In the Bradford trade there were three women to every man. Extracts are from evidence before the Royal Commission on Labour, 1892, XXXV, [6708-VI] Group C: *a)* Evidence, 5396-400; *b)* Evidence, 5444-8, given by Ben Turner (see Nos. 106, 122).

a) Do you wish the Commission to understand that a weaver in the Bradford trade, fully employed, would not earn more than 16s. in a week?—I do.

And a woman would earn the same?—And a woman would earn the same under similar circumstances.

Did you say [that] sometimes they earn as low as 2s.—that is, when there is little employment for them?—That is when they are short of work. . . .

You think that a full week's work would give earnings of about 16s. only?—That is not an average, you must understand. Weavers, I say, can earn up to 16s.; but my impression is that an average weaver, with average employment, will earn from year to year about 9s. a week.

b) My wife and I were compelled by circumstances to work side by side and keep ourselves going. It is a common thing.

How many years did you do that?—At least four years. During the greater part of the time I do not think the wages of both of us would average above 14s. a week. . . .

You married when your joint wages were only about 14s. a week?—No, at that time I was already married. At the time I was married I was working at another employment which would have kept my wife in decency and comfort, and did so for some considerable time after our marriage. But unfortunately I became ill . . . and had to go into the mills and weave.

62. THE MINERS' FEDERATION: OBJECTS

The Miners' Federation of Great Britain held its foundation conference at Newport in November, 1889, fifty years after the Newport insurrection of the Chartists had ended in defeat. The Federation represented a most important advance because, unlike its predecessor, the Miners' National Union, it took up trade and wages questions, provided for the support of one district by the joint action of all the others, and definitely excluded the policy of the sliding scale, according to which wages must be determined by prices rather than by the workers' standard of life. The fact that it put the miners' legal eight-hour day in the forefront of its programme brought it into association with the Socialist or Socialist-influenced T.U.C. delegates, who were pressing for a general legal eight-hour day. But though the M.F.G.B. could thus be considered as an ally—if not part of—the “New Unionism,” its leaders, rooted in the radical democratic tradition, would have nothing to do with “Socialism” or with any form of labour representation that broke with the radical wing of the Liberal Party. Thus the M.F.G.B. unions (and still more the minority of county associations outside the M.F.G.B., e.g. Northumberland, Durham) constituted until 1908 the largest remaining support for the Liberal Party within the trade union movement.

*Objects of Association of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain,
Adopted at its Foundation Conference at Newport, November,
1889*

- (1) To provide funds to carry on the business of this Federation, and the same to be disbursed as provided in the following rules.
- (2) To take into consideration the question of Trade and Wages, and to protect Miners generally.
- (3) To seek to secure Mining Legislation affecting all Miners connected with this Federation.
- (4) To call Conferences to deal with questions affecting Miners both of a Trade, Wage and Legislative character.
- (5) To seek to obtain an eight-hours' day from bank to bank in all Mines for all persons working underground.
- (6) To deal with and watch all inquests upon persons killed in the Mines where more than three persons are killed by any one accident.
- (7) To seek to obtain compensation where more than three persons are injured or killed in one accident, in all cases where Counties, Federations, or Districts have to appeal, or are appealed against, from decisions in the lower Courts.

63. THE SOUTH WALES MINERS' LEADER

The South Wales miners were tied to the sliding scale, 1875-98, and could not develop trade union organisation. (See Volume II of this series.) William Abraham (1842, 1922), their leader during the sliding scale period, remained their leader after they joined the Miners' Federation. He was always known by his pen-name, "Mabon" (bard). Extract from *My Life for Labour*, by Robert Smillie, 1924, pp. 62-3.

It was at these gatherings that I discovered the secret of "Mabon's" vast influence over the Welsh miners. If any friction arose and pandemonium threatened . . . "Mabon" never tried to restore order in any usual way. He promptly struck up a Welsh hymn or that magical melody, "Land

of My Fathers." Hardly had he reached the second line when, with uplifted arms, as though drawing the whole multitude into the circle of his influence, he had the vast audience dropping into their respective "parts" and accompanying him like a great trained choir. It was wonderful, almost magical, and the effect was thrilling. When the hymn or song was finished, he raised a hand, and instantly perfect silence fell. The storm had passed. This is not an isolated case. I have seen many such.

64. THE BRYANT AND MAY GIRLS

The Bryant and May strike broke out unexpectedly after Mrs. Annie Besant, Socialist and later theosophist and leader of the Indian National Congress, had exposed conditions in the factory in her paper, *The Link* (May, 1888). Largely through the help of Socialists, the strike was won. With it began the movement of 1889-92. The extract is from *Toilers in London*, 1889, p. 176. The pennies referred to were an unwarranted deduction.

At the time of the strike . . . a girl was asked why it had taken place.

"Well, it just went like tinder," she said; "one girl began, and the rest said, 'yes,' so out we all went."

When the girls were being paid their week's wages at Charrington's Hall on Mile End Waste after the strike, it was curious to see the waves of feeling that rolled over their faces, how all seemed influenced at the same time, and in the same manner, by what was said and done for them. And few people could help being touched by the way in which the girls were determined to stand together at all costs. "I can pawn this for you," "I'll lend you that to take to my uncle's" was heard all about the room, and in every direction girls might be seen plotting how they could help one another on, until Bryant and May's gave them back their "pennies."

65. A UNION IS BORN: THE GASWORKERS ORGANISE, 1889

The Gasworkers and General Labourers' Union, now the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, was the first of the new unions of unskilled workers. By the sheer weight of organisation, they exchanged their twelve-hour shifts for an eight-hour day without a strike. Although the eight-hour day was later lost again, the old hours were never resumed and the initial victory of organisation was sustained. The extract is from Will Thorne, *My Life's Battles*, pp. 69 *seq.* Will Thorne (1857-1946), General Secretary of the Gasworkers Union 1889-1934, was a member of the Social-Democratic Federation, and became a famous figure in West Ham, for which he was M.P., 1906-45. See also No. 114.

GENERALLY the men had no food, because when they left home they did not know that they would have to stay on and work later. There was a big canteen adjacent to the works [Beckton Gasworks—ED.], where sometimes food and drink were obtainable, but when the eighteen-hour shift was finished, the men living at Poplar and Canning Town, as most of them did, had a walk of nearly four miles. This caused a great deal of annoyance and, on top of the other slave-driving methods, caused the men to get desperate. They were almost prepared to go on strike, even though they had no union behind them. I saw the time was ripe. . . .

A few of us got together; I gave them my views and we held a meeting. This was on March 31st, 1889. . . . A resolution was passed in favour of a gasworkers' union being formed, with the eight-hour day as one of its objects. With George Angle and George Gilby, I was elected as a delegate to represent my shift. The opposite shift was represented by four other men, Hutchings, Mack, Gundy and Mansfield—God bless their brave hearts! . . .

Sunday morning, March 31st, 1889—a lovely sunny morning—was the birthday of the National Union of Gasworkers and General Labourers of Great Britain and Ireland. . . .

After the speeches were over, I called for volunteers to

form an organising committee, of which George Angle was appointed the secretary; then we started to take down the names of the men who wanted to join up. Eight hundred joined that morning. The entrance fee was one shilling, and we had to borrow several pails to hold the coppers and other coins that were paid in. . . .

The meeting over, we had to get down to business. Ben Tillett [who had been called in by Thorne—Ed.], Byford and myself formed ourselves into a "provisional committee" to draft a set of rules and to discuss ways and means of getting . . . the workers in the other gasworks round London. Byford was made treasurer. He was the proprietor of a temperance bar at 144 Barking Road. He had a good knowledge of trade union administration, because for many years he had been secretary of the Yorkshire Glass Bottle Workers Association.

I was highly elated at our success. The news of the meeting spread like wildfire; in the public houses, factories and works in Canning Town, Barking, East and West Ham, everyone was talking about the union. . . .

I had to return to my work that Sunday night, as I had been on the day shift the previous week. The men at the works could talk about nothing else but "the union" and what it was going to do. . . .

Sunday after Sunday we would start off from 144 Barking Road, our headquarters, to encourage the men at other gas-works. As many as twenty brake-loads of workers would go out on these Sunday morning crusades. The idea caught on; enthusiasm was at a high pitch, and within two weeks we had over 3,000 men in the union.

Never before had men responded like they did. For months London was ablaze. The newspapers throughout the country were giving good reports of our activities. They were curious to know what we wanted and what we were going to do.

I knew what we were going to do. I kept in mind all the time my pledge to the men at the first meeting. To work and fight for the eight-hour day—that was my first objective, soon to be won.

66. NEW UNIONS: TECHNICAL PROBLEMS

It was not easy for unskilled labourers to run a large organisation. Thorne had no education as a child. He tells how Eleanor Marx-Aveling, daughter of Marx, helped him to improve his reading and writing, "which was very bad at the time" (Thorne, *op. cit.*, p. 47). The extract is from Thorne, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

THE turmoil of the various strikes having subsided, another awkward problem presented itself to me: to make up the accounts of the union.

The general secretary of a trade union is legally responsible for the keeping of the books of accounts and the proper spending of the funds. To carry on this part of my duties at the time I refer to caused me considerable anxiety. . . .

At that time we had between 15,000 and 20,000 members in over forty branches, each branch sending weekly its cash to the head office, together with the details of any moneys spent. . . . In addition to this I had a multitude of correspondence, vouchers, bills, etc., which were simply strewn everywhere about the office. There was no regular system of filing of any kind.

I must confess that account keeping and preparing balance sheets were tasks for which I had had no training or experience. But the job had to be accomplished somehow. I began by gathering up all papers I could find in the office and sorting them out into a semblance of order. An income of over £3,000 had to be accounted for. There were bills of every imaginable shape and size, written on all kinds of paper, in pencil and ink, a large proportion of them almost indecipherable. Our office then was just one small room, with meagre and primitive furniture, where the whole of our work had to be done, including the holding of committee-meetings. . . .

67. THE DOCKERS BEFORE THE STRIKE

From *The Story of the Dockers' Strike*, by H. L. Smith and
V. Nash, 1889, p. 47.

COLONEL BIRT, the general manager of the Millwall Docks, in speaking of these men, told the Lords' Committee [on Sweating, 1888] that "the very costume in which they presented themselves to the work prevent them doing work. The poor fellows are miserably clad, scarcely with a boot on their foot, in a most miserable state; and they cannot run, their boots would not permit them. . . . There are men who come . . . on without having a bit of food in their stomachs, perhaps since the previous day; they have worked for an hour and have earned 5*d.*; their hunger will not allow them to continue; they take the 5*d.* in order that they may get food, perhaps the first food they have had for twenty-four hours. Many people complain . . . that they will not work after 4 o'clock. . . . But really if you only consider it, it is natural. These poor men come on work without a farthing in their pockets; they have not anything to eat in the middle of the day; some of them will raise or have a penny, and buy a little fried fish, and by four o'clock their strength is utterly gone; they pay themselves off; it is absolute necessity which compels them to pay themselves off. . . ."

68. SCENES FROM THE DOCK STRIKE, 1889

The Dock Strike was the most dramatic labour conflict of the period, as it was a fight of the most derelict and depressed workers, hitherto thought unorganisable. Its leaders were Ben Tillett, who had begun the dockers' organisation, and his Socialist friends John Burns and Tom Mann with many helpers. The victory of the "dockers' tanner" was a victory for the elementary rights of trade union organisation which led to a vast movement of trade union organisation among both skilled and unskilled. The Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Labourers' Union, formed out of the strike with Mann and Tillett as President and Secretary, eventually developed into the Transport and General Workers' Union. Extracts below are taken from H. Llewellyn-Smith and V. Nash's *Story of the Dockers' Strike*, 1889, the most complete eye-witness account, pp. 94, 79, 84. a) mentions Wroot's Coffee House, the first strike headquarters in Jeremiah St., Poplar; b) refers to "Jack" Burns and to Ben Tillett, who was often compared to Napoleon. The daily meeting on Tower Hill and c) procession through the City helped to keep up the spirits and organisation of the strikers.

a) TOM MANN IN CHARGE OF RELIEF

On the last day at Wroot's Tom Mann took the relief work in hand. His Wednesday morning's work may serve to give some idea of what is demanded of a strike field marshal. There was a crowd of nearly 4,000 men waiting outside. Mann pledged them his word that every man should get his ticket if he would take his turn and bide his time; then, planting himself in the doorway, his back jammed against one side of the frame, his foot up against the other, he allowed the men to creep in one at a time, under his leg. Hour after hour went by, while Tom Mann, stripped to the waist, stuck to his post, forcing the men down as they came up to him, chaffing, persuading, remonstrating, whenever the swaying mass of dockers got out of control, until at last the street was cleared.

b) THE DAILY MEETING ON TOWER HILL

The crowd took in what was said through its eyes. Jack always looked like winning, and Ben, standing rigid, with folded arms on the parapet, had a touch of the Corsican

corporal. "Here's a thousand pounds from Australia, lads," Burns would say, tapping the ammunition pouch, "and now I'm going to tell you how we stand." Then came the news up to date, in short, sharp, picturesque sentences, and then the orders for the day, and the weather forecast. Jack's barometer always stood high, no matter what clouds might be gathering below the horizon. "Draw your belts tight, lads, and no surrender; and we shall win if you behave like men." Many of those in the crowd had served with the colours or before the mast, and they took kindly to the military terms in which their leaders addressed them, and to the drill which they were sometimes put through. . . .

Burns knew how to enlist the sympathy of all classes and sections of the public. "The Guards are coming," shouted a man excitedly, as a regiment of the Coldstreams on the way to their quarters in the Tower, came in sight. "Let them come," said Burns, "they've brought their bands. It's very considerate of them, for we haven't got one this morning. Let them come; they are sons of the people, and when they have served their time with the colours they will be down at the dock gates looking after their tanner. Three cheers for the Guards." The crowd cheered wildly, led by the straw hat of the inspired recruiting-sergeant.

c) THE PROCESSION THROUGH THE CITY

First came a posse of police, behind whom the marshals of the procession, with axes and scarves, reserved a clear place for the leaders. . . . Next came the brass band of the stevedores, following which streamed the multitude whose calling lay at the docks and riverside. Such finery as they boasted in the way of flags and banners had been lent by friendly and trade societies, and this gave the procession the appearance of a great church parade or demonstration of foresters. There were burly stevedores, lightermen, ship painters, sailors and firemen, riggers, scrapers, engineers, shipwrights, permanent men got up respectably, preferables cleaned up to look like permanents, and

unmistakable casuals with vari-coloured patches on their faded greenish garments; Foresters and Sons of the Phoenix in gaudy scarves; Doggett's prize winners, a stalwart battalion of watermen marching proudly in long scarlet coats, pink stockings and velvet caps, with huge pewter badges on their breasts; . . . coalies in waggons fishing aggressively for coppers with bags tied to the ends of poles; . . . skiffs mounted on wheels manned by stolid watermen; ballast heavers laboriously winding and tipping an empty basket, Father Neptune on his car in tinsel crown and flowing locks, surrounded by his suite—Britannia in a Union Jack skirt, the doctor in a faultless hat (translated at Petticoat Lane) and the barber brandishing a huge razor, ready for the victims of the equator on the other side of the car. Emblems quaint and pathetic were carried in the ranks, the docker's cat and the sweater's cat, the docker's dinner and the sweater's dinner, the docker's baby and the sweater's baby, diminutive and ample respectively; . . . the bass dressers, locked out for forming a union, brought up the rear, carrying their bass brooms like lictors.

Such was the strike procession.

69. AFTER THE DOCK STRIKE: A VETERAN'S WELCOME

George Julian Harney (1817-97), veteran Chartist, in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, quoted from the *Labour Elector*, September 28th, 1889. See Volume I of this series.

[THE strike] has recalled the memory of other great labour struggles. . . . But all strikes, turn-outs and lock-outs of the past must pale their ineffectual fires in presence of the great revolt at the East End of London. . . . Not since the high and palmy days of Chartism have I witnessed any movement corresponding in importance and interest to the great strike of 1889. How poor and paltry in comparison, appear the make-believe Caucus-manufactured "movements" of recent years. . . . Whatever the immediate issue, the strikers have "felt their strength and made it felt"

and it is safe to predict that this will not be the last revolt of the East End.

70. UNION NEWS: DOCKERS AFTER THE STRIKE

This extract, from the *Labour Elector*, October 26th, 1889, illustrates the spread of unionism among dockers after the strike.

PLEASE TO HEAR IT

Nine hundred men of the true, sturdy stamp, as Tom McCarthy calls them, are a valuable addition, and we welcome the Deal Porters to the ranks of the D.W.R. & G.L.U. They meet at Wood's Coffee Tavern, Deptford, and are a credit to any organisation.

BRISTOL ALERT

The wave of enthusiasm in the cause of Unionism which has swept over London, has now inundated Bristol. Ben Tillett has been down there, and received a warm welcome. The Rev. Gilmore Barnett and other local supporters of the Labour movement have promised their assistance. A big demonstration is arranged. . . . All should go who can. And all should help to form a good, strong branch of the D.W.R. & G.L.U. To combine is to succeed.

SWANSEA AND LANDORE

Swansea and Landore want branches of the Union there. Good old boys of Gwalia! We have heard too much of low wages ruling because cost of living is low down your way. "The labourer is worthy of his hire" whether living is high or low. The only way to impress this fact is to unite and be strong. By this you may not only impress it—you may enforce it.

LEITH ALIVE

The men of Leith are moving now. They are going to bear the burden no longer. That's it. They are going to combine, and ask Ben Tillett and Tom Mann to go over and help them. Unionism means social salvation. All workers should recognise that and act upon it.

71. THE DOCKERS' UNION DESCRIBES ITS EMBLEM

From the *Monthly Record of the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Labourers' Union of Great Britain, Ireland and the Netherlands*, June, 1890, p. 7. The emblem, which paid-up members received, was lithographed in fifteen colours.

THE Central Scene depicts a view taken in the LONDON DOCKS the prominent feature of which is the *three-masted sailing vessel* bearing the appropriate name of "Liberty," with *Lighters* lying alongside, and a range of *Warehouses* in the background. Entwined round its base are two sprays of *Oak* and *Laurel* signifying "Stability" and "Honour." This is surmounted by a *Scroll* headed "Our Motto" containing the lines from SHELLEY: "A Nation made free by love, a mighty brotherhood linked by a jealous interchange of good." Above this, in clusters, are the FLORAL EMBLEMS OF ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, IRELAND AND WALES, viz.: the *Rose*, the *Shamrock*, *Thistle* and *Leek*. To the left is a view of ST. KATHERINE'S DOCK showing the *Tea Operatives* at work in the foreground. On the right are the *Deal Porters* at the SURREY DOCK. Beneath these on either side are the figures of JUSTICE and HOPE, standing on separate *pedestals* which bear the names of the various *Industries* incorporated in this Union. Between them lies an engraved *Tablet* with a *facsimile* of the UNION'S SEAL certifying that the possessor is . . . a member. At the base on the left is the entrance to the ALBERT DOCKS, and on the right a view of the WHARF at WAPPING, with *Shipping* and *Warehouses* on the far side of the River. Between these in the centre is shown a picture of LONDON BRIDGE taken from the crowded "POOL" with ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL in the distance over which runs a *ribbon* with the words "Be United and Industrious." At the top of the Emblem is the SYMBOL OF THE UNION—*two hands firmly clasped*—appositely explained by the sentence beneath: "The Grip of Brotherhood the World O'er." The SHIELDS of the ARMS of ENGLAND and AUSTRALIA are each supported by a representative son, with the national accessories and their mottoes—

"Unity is Strength" and "Advance Australia" are introduced at the foot. Resting on the *Shields* is the *Globe* on which may be seen the mother country and her antipodal, yet closely allied Australian Colony. . . . On the left of this view is . . . the EAST INDIA DOCK entrance, and on the right a corresponding scene showing the entrance to the WEST INDIA DOCKS. Beneath the title of the Union is an oval representing *Hoppers* and *Cranes* discharging grain at the MILLWALL DOCKS.

The Ornamental portion of the Emblem is chiefly in the Renaissance style.

72. AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

Organising one kind of general labour soon meant organising other kinds. The new unionism brought a great revival of agricultural trade unionism, which had almost died away again during the agricultural crisis of the Great Depression, following the "revolt" led by Joseph Arch in 1872. (See Vol. II of this series.) Extract *a*) is from the *Labour World*, February 8th, 1891; Tom Mann later also helped to found the *Workers' Union* (No. 89); *b*) is a letter from George Edwards to the Cromer District of the Norfolk and Norwich Amalgamated Labour Union (a purely agricultural area). Edwards, once a member of Arch's Union, built up the Eastern Counties Agricultural Labourers' and Small Holders' Union, which in 1912 became The National Agricultural Labourers and Rural Workers' Union. His letter shows the close link between Nonconformity and village unionism which comes out so strongly in the history of Arch. At the end of 1891 Cromer District had 541 members in twenty branches: 339 had been recruited in the past year. There had been eight strikes, of from eight to sixty-five days in length. Five branches had paid emigration benefits. This letter is from the Webb Collection.

a) TOM MANN IN LINCOLNSHIRE

MR. TOM MANN has opened a campaign among the agricultural labourers in Lincolnshire. With the idea of preventing the influx of blacklegs from the immediate neighbourhood of the ports, the work has been commenced in the first place around Grimsby and Hull. . . .

Wherever Tom Mann has gone he has been welcomed most heartily and before the end of next week there will be six union branches established in mid-Lincolnshire. . . .

b) GEORGE EDWARDS IN NORFOLK

RESPECTED BRETHREN,—

The year has been an eventful one. We commenced it with several men on our funds who were manfully resisting a reduction of Wages and in every case we have won. We have paid away £17 6 8 in resisting unfair treatment; and at Guestwick we granted £3 10 0 to our members who were greatly hindered by the Non-union men, and rather than let them Strike at a time when the employers would have laughed at the men, the Committee granted them a shilling a week each until such time as the men could make their power felt. I am glad to say the course the Committee took . . . has been the means of raising a powerful branch in that place. . . .

I have attended fifty public meetings during the year and 30 branch meetings. The following places have been visited unsuccessfully: Mattisall, Hockering, Ringland, Horsford, Haisborough, Worstead, Sco Ruston, Hoveton St. John. Holt and Kelling have left us, and gone back again into Egyptian bondage, where I wish them many happy returns under their taskmasters. [Five] places have been successfully visited and very good Branches formed. . . .

The hand of Death has removed from us one of our most ardent workers, Bro. James Codling of Hindolvestone, who I have greatly missed when visiting that Branch, but hope our loss is his Eternal gain.

Thanking you for your confidence in the past, hoping that our noble cause may continue to prosper and may God guide us in all our actions and deliberations.

I beg to remain,

Yours fraternally,

GEORGE EDWARDS,

District Secretary.

73. WOMEN START A UNION: LIVERPOOL, 1890

All new unions admitted women on an equal footing, but the temporary wave of women's unionism soon subsided. The vast majority of organised women were in the textile trades, where unionism was not new. Extract from the Royal Commission on Labour, 1893 [6894-xxiii], p. 70.

THE president and secretary of the Liverpool Tailoresses and Coatmakers Union gave the following account of its formation and progress. It was formed in the summer of 1890; the Jewish tailors had formed a society and gained a reduction in hours. The women coatmakers thought that "what a foreigner could do a woman could." They therefore prepared slips of paper and went round to the workshops and persuaded 260 women coatmakers to sign their names and addresses in favour of a trade union and a reduction in hours. The Trades Council assisted them and they called a meeting at the Oddfellows Hall and formed themselves into a Union and elected a president a secretary and a committee. Then they sent a memorial to the Middlemen's Society asking for a two hours' reduction. No notice was taken of their request. They therefore blocked two shops and sent a letter saying that the reduction of hours must be given without any reduction in wages and without adopting the piece-work system.

They had so far no funds. . . . The middlemen held a meeting and decided to lock them out, thinking that without funds they would be frightened. The Trades Council had, however, promised them support and the girls kept together and patrolled the streets to show what respectable-looking people they were, as statements to the contrary had been made. . . .

As soon as the reduction of hours had been granted the numbers in the union began to diminish. . . . "The women are kept combined" now by tea-parties and picnics given them in many cases by a few persons interested in the trade union movement.

74. WOMEN AND THE CO-OP GUILD

From *The Women's Co-operative Guild*, 1883-1904, by Margaret Llewellyn Davies, 1904, p. 22. The speaker is a young working woman.

THE men must leave home for work, but after working hours they can attend all sorts of social and political meetings, but if the women wish for a little variety and would like to meet together for a little social intercourse, we are sometimes told that we had "better attend to our home affairs and keep the stockings mended." Now I believe most women are about as fond of mending stockings as men are of cleaning shoes. . . .

75. STEAM TUG MEN DEMAND A RISE

The Humber Steam Tug Men's Union and Protective Association, 1891. From the Webb Collection.

Hull, July 7th, 1891.

TO THE STEAM TUG OWNERS OF HULL

GENTLEMEN,—

Knowing that we have long laboured under disadvantages, the peculiarities of which do not exist in other ports, we consider that our present rate of pay is inadequate to the hours we labour and the work we have to perform, and as we invariably have to work all holidays, Christmas Day and Sundays included, we think we may with justice ask you to raise our wages to the under-mentioned rates, viz.:

Captains, mates, engine-men and firemen, £1 per week with the old rate of commission, and 4s. a day when laid up.

The working hours when laid up to be from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. ceasing work at 12 o'clock on Saturdays.

We also wish to inform you that on and after the 10th day of August we shall not work with any non-society men.

We may also state that it is our earnest desire that now and in future we shall endeavour to work amicably together, and study each other's interest, thus avoiding enmity on both sides.

Hoping you will kindly consider the matter, and return a favourable reply,

We are, Sirs,

Yours respectfully,

THE COMMITTEE.

J. A. KIME, *Secretary*.

PS.—We should also be glad to meet, or send, a deputation at any time or place that will suit your convenience.

76. CHEMICAL WORKERS ADVANCE

P. J. King, Secretary of the Chemical and Copper Workers Union, gives evidence. Royal Commission on Labour, 1892, XXXVI (11) [6795-VI] Group C, 20,789-98.

Now when the men joined the union will you tell us what were their hours of labour? . . . 56 hours one week and 112 in another . . . or an average of 84 hours in the week. . . .

They averaged that the year round?—Yes. . . .

Are they paid by the hour?—I will not speak definitely with regard to wages. They are paid sometimes by the amount of what they do. For instance the salt cake men are paid principally about 3s. a ton and each man then is paid in proportion to that. The leading hand—the boiler-man—gets £1 15s. a week. He had only £1 8s. a week previous to the formation of the Union, but we got an advance of 7s. through the Union. . . .

Then throughout this group of trades there has been a general advance, has there?—Yes.

During the last three years [1888-91]?—Yes, very shortly after the formation of the Union. My object was more to reduce the hours of labour to eight per day than to obtain any advance for the men, but I thought it a good opportunity of giving the men an object lesson in trades

unionism, in order to induce them to stick to it; but my principal object in forming the Union and in continuing with it is my hope and desire to accomplish the eight hours day.

77. LONDON TRANSPORT WORKERS

Transport workers were, until the "New Unionism," almost unorganised. Buses were, of course, horse-drawn. Extract from the evidence of T. Sutherst before the Royal Commission on Labour, 1892, XXXVI (11) [6795-V] Group B, 15,756.

I WILL take first the London General Omnibus Company. On the line of buses going from the "Prince of Wales," Hackney, to Piccadilly Circus, they begin at 10.40 a.m. and they work to 12.30 a.m. on one day; another day they begin at 10.40 a.m. and work to 7.40 p.m. They are allowed 20 minutes off at the end of each journey, but they have no time for meals except the 20 minutes. . . . Then the "Hornsey Wood Tavern" to London Bridge, Favourite buses. They work 10 hours one day, 15 hours the next. . . . Then the King's Cross and Victoria buses run from 7.45 to 10.20 daily, that is 15 hours a day, and then there is the extra in the yard. I believe they are working between 15 and 16 hours a day every day on that road.

78. OMNIBUS STRIKE AND LONDON TRADES COUNCIL

The National Vehicular Traffic Workers Union was started after the great London strike of 1891. Fred Hammill, a Socialist engineer, their President, gives the address at their first annual conference 1892: (published, 1892, as a pamphlet).

At the close of one of the historical strikes in the year 1891, viz. the great Omnibus Strike, there was a general desire among the men for a permanent organization. After many appeals to the London Trades Council for assistance, the

Executive of that body decided to appoint an Organizer. . . . The Council then generously voted a sum of £10 to pay my wages for one month, after the expiration of which period the duly-elected Executive of your Union insisted on me remaining with you up to the present moment, they electing me as Organizing President of your Union.

The Organization which you now represent, commenced, as you perceive, under exceedingly trying circumstances. Six omnibus men who had been weeks without employment, owing to the part they displayed through the 'Bus Strike, were engaged as Collectors, and they absorbed half my month's wages before we commenced operations at all. Your now General Secretary, Mr. H. Bowbrick, had to pawn his watch and guard to pay a deposit on renting your Offices. Thus commenced your Organization practically in the pawnshop and under the auspices of the London Trades Council.

79. PUTTING LIFE INTO TRADES COUNCILS

For the part Trades Councils played in organising the new unions, see Nos. 73 and 78. The effort to put life into them was, on the whole, very successful. So much so that in 1895 the Trades Councils were excluded from the T.U.C. as too "Socialist" (No. 134). From the *Labour Elector*, September 21st, 1889.

THE . . . duty of every man and woman who understands the value of Trade Unionism . . . is to see to it that in the Metropolis at any rate, Federation of Trades shall become a living reality. . . . Every reader of these lines should attend the next meeting of his branch of his Society and move . . . a resolution . . . [to send delegates to the London Trades Council]. We hear that the Battersea branch of [the Amalgamated Society of Engineers] has elected Mr. Tom Mann, and one of the Woolwich branches Mr. F. P. Hammill as delegates to the London Trades Council. We hope to hear during the next ten days that their excellent example has been followed by every other branch of the Engineers in the Metropolitan

area, and by each branch of the Boilermakers, the Sailors and Firemen, the Stevedores, the Gas Workers, the Shop Assistants and the countless other organisations, new and old, which have the future of London Labour in their hand.

80. SCABS: OFFICE HOURS

From the Rules of the Factory Operatives and General Labourers Union. Webb Collection.

BLACKLEGS OR SCABS

ALL respectable members will avoid living, eating, drinking, working, walking, speaking or in any way encouraging these objectionable rags of society to exist to any extent in our midst. The books and all accounts of this Union will be open to all those interested in its funds at any time during office hours where the business will not be delayed in consequence.

81. FLUCTUATION: SOUTHAMPTON DOCKERS, 1892

The new unions were difficult to stabilise and most of all the dockers' unions, because of the excessive fluctuation in dock work. Extract from the evidence of Tom MacCarthy, Dockers' Union, before the Royal Commission on Labour, 1892, XXXVI (II), [6795-V] Group B, 12,391-96.

WHAT is the present position [January, 1892] of the union in Southampton?—The present position . . . is very low indeed. There are just some few hundreds in the Union. . . . There are, I think, some 200 or 300 men there altogether; there were 2,000 or 3,000. Of course the Union, as compared with what it was, is entirely broken up. . . .

By the action of the employers?—Oh no. . . . It was broken up for the reason that the men left it because the executive were not paid strike pay, contrary to rule. You see the organisation had not taught them; there had not been sufficient time to show these men what organisation

83. THE NEW UNIONIST OUTLOOK

From Tom Mann and Ben Tillett, *The "New" Trades Unionism*, 1890.

WE have thrown ourselves into this work, and whatever genuine enthusiasm in a noble and righteous cause can do—tempered, we trust, with all necessary discretion—shall be done. Poverty, in our opinion, can be abolished, and we consider it is the work of the trade unionist to do this. We want to see the necessary economic knowledge imparted in our labour organisations, so that labour in the future shall not be made the shuttlecock of political parties. Our trade unions shall be the centres of enlightenment, and not merely the meeting-place for paying contributions and receiving donations. The organisation of those who are classed as unskilled is of the most vital importance, and must receive adequate attention; no longer can the skilled assume with a sort of superior air that they are the salt of the earth. The man or the woman who honestly toils, no matter in what capacity, is of the most vital concern to the community; and his or her surroundings should be equal to those of any other citizen. In any case such is our belief, and such is the policy we shall habitually advocate on and off the London Trades Council; and those who don't like it, had better prepare at once their best weapons to meet us, for assuredly they will be allowed no peace by us until such a policy is paramount. . . .

The cause we have at heart is too sacred to admit of time being spent quarrelling amongst ourselves, and whilst we make no pretence to the possession of special virtues, we are prepared to work unceasingly for the economic emancipation of the workers. Our ideal is a CO-OPERATIVE COMMONWEALTH. This we believe will be reached by honest effort in various directions, chief among which will be the efforts of the trade unionists; and whilst striving for the ideal, we are glad to know that we need not wait for years before further advantages can be obtained, but that by discreet conduct on our part, we can be continually

gaining some advantage for one or other section of the workers. The abolition of systematic overtime, material reductions of working hours, elimination of sweaters, an ever-increasing demand for a more righteous share of the wealth created by labour—all these are points in our programme.

84. THE GASWORKERS' STATEMENT OF AIMS, 1889 AND 1892

The transition of the Gasworkers from "old" to "new" trade unionism is shown in the preambles to their rules, 1889 and 1892; the later one was probably drafted by Edward and Eleanor Marx-Aveling (Marx's daughter), who were prominent advisers to the Gasworkers. Eleanor Marx was a member of the Union's Executive and formed its first women's branch. Extracts are from the Rules of the National Union of Gasworkers and General Labourers, editions of 1889 and 1892.

1889: ADDRESS TO BE READ TO MEMBERS ON ADMISSION
DEAR SIR AND BROTHER,—

The principles of Trade Unionism in other directions has effected a great good. Every body of workmen combining for their mutual benefit have, in measured proportion to the individual and collective interest taken, been a power and social lever to raise the workers to a position of strength in an industrial sense, it has quickened and given life to feelings of a broader sympathy and brotherly trust, has increased the intelligence, elevated the moral tone, and brightened the life of all who, having regard for themselves and love for their fellows, being prompted to action by their conviction, have thrown in their lot in the battle of labour against capital.

The value of labour being weighed by its productive results by the Capitalist, it is the first and most sacred duty of each worker concerned to secure for himself the highest return in exchange for his heavy toil, to rest not, or be content, until the right is recognised, and men are permitted to live under conditions which enable them to bring the moderate comforts of living to wife, children and

home. These can only be obtained by Unity, by an intelligent consideration of labour and social problems; by the casting aside of all individual prejudice and jealousy; by a common agreement for the common good, and a discipline that nothing may thwart or hinder the . . . triumph of our cause. You are asked to yield a cheerful obedience to all our laws and be guilty of no act tending to injure the harmonious working of our organisation; to stand by your fellows in all disputes, that their interest may be your interest, and your interest theirs; to respect all in any place and at any time, while at work, in discussion and assembly.

This will make your manhood nobler, your sympathy truer, and will yield you and yours a harvest of blessings.

1892: PREAMBLE TO THE RULES OF THE SAME UNION

FELLOW WORKERS,—

Trade Unionism has done excellent work in the past, and in it lies the hope of the Workers for the future; that is the Trade Unionism which clearly recognises that to-day there are only two classes, the producing Working Class and the possessing Master Class. The interests of these two classes are opposed to each other. The Masters have known this a long time; the Workers are beginning to see it, and so they are forming Trade Unions to protect themselves, and to get as much as they can of the product of their labour. They are beginning to understand that their only hope lies in themselves, and that from the masters *as a class* they can expect no help; that divided they fall, united they stand. This is why every form of labour is now organising, even what is called "unskilled" labour—by far the most numerous, important and essential of all. This is why the Gasworkers and General Labourers Union has been formed; a union that embraces every kind of "unskilled" labour and admits all workers, women as well as men, on an equal footing.

The immediate objects of this Union are the improvement of the material conditions of its Members; the

raising of them from mere beasts of burden to human beings; the making brighter and happier the home of every worker; the saving of little children from the hard, degrading, bitter life to which they are condemned to-day; the dividing more equally between all men and women the tears and laughter, the sorrow and the joy, the labour and the leisure of the world. It is important that all members should understand the necessity for and the aims of this Union; that they should accept and loyally carry out its Rules; that they should remember that the interests of all Workers are one, and a wrong done to any kind of Labour is a wrong done to the whole of the Working Class, and that victory or defeat of any portion of the Army of Labour is a gain or a loss to the whole of that Army, which, by its organisation and union is marching steadily and irresistibly forward to its ultimate goal—the Emancipation of the Working Class.—That Emancipation can only be brought about by the strenuous and united efforts of the Working Class itself.

WORKERS UNITE!

85. FOR THE LEGAL EIGHT-HOUR DAY

Extract a) is from Keir Hardie's speech for his motion, which was defeated by 75-49 votes at the T.U.C. in 1889, *T.U.C. Report*, 1889, pp. 47-8; b) is from the same Congress *Report*, p. 55; c) is from the Socialist James Macdonald's speech at the T.U.C., 1891, *Report*, p. 76.

a) HE thought that it would be admitted that the problem of the age was how to dispose of its surplus labour. That which faced them at every turn in the labour world was the number of unemployed men in the market. If they proposed to shorten the hours of labour, they were met by men standing outside their workshop gates prepared to take their places even at longer hours, provided they only got permission to work at all. If they sought to raise wages, there were thousands of men prepared to fill up their places in the workshop, even at a reduction in wages, if

only permitted to work. If they sought to improve the dwellings of the poor they found that they were huddled together in congested districts, in order to be near their employment. If they sought to deal with the sweating question, they were met by the fact that there were hundreds of thousands glad to be allowed to work for the sweater in order to obtain the necessities of life. . . . They must face [this question] somehow.

Emigration was put forward as a remedy, but he submitted that emigration was no remedy. (*Hear, hear.*) . . . There were other remedies such as free land, and he admitted that that would do much to remedy the question; but he asked the delegates whether they were more likely to obtain eight hours or the nationalisation of the land. He submitted that the eight hours question could be put through Parliament in a tithe of the time that it would take to nationalise or free the land for the benefit of the labourer upon it. It seemed not possible to shorten the hours of labour in this country without legislative action. If all men would join the union there would be no need for Parliamentary interference. (*Hear, hear.*) But then, all men would not join the union and trade unionists had a right to ask Parliament to protect them against the criminal carelessness of these men, who not only did harm to themselves, but to their organised neighbours. (*Loud Applause.*)

b) Mr. Matkin (Liverpool) said that as an old trade unionist when he saw in the trade to which he belonged—the carpenters and joiners—that out of something like 360,000 connected with the trade there were only about 37,000 connected with their various societies, he saw the difficulty they would have in passing an Eight-Hours Day of Labour Bill without the assistance of Parliament. . . . With regard to the boilermakers, the iron-moulders and the miners, he had no doubt that they might be in a position to enforce an eight-hours day, but in a large number of trades . . . it would be an impossibility. They had conclusive proof the day before with the Railway

Servants—that they would be glad to accept a Ten-Hour Bill or even a Twelve-Hours Bill.

c) It seemed to him that a few of their friends who were discussing the matter were in the same position as the opponents of the Factory Acts 30 or 40 years ago. Ruin and disaster always stared the capitalist in the face when workmen asked to have a little benefit from the product of their labour. To-day they had friends whose sole object seemed not so much to elevate labour as to preserve the interests of the capitalist classes. . . . The textile industry might or might not be ruined. But there was no danger of this if there was an international understanding amongst workmen as to the hours of labour.

86. AGAINST THE LEGAL EIGHT-HOUR DAY

The first extract is from the speech of W. Mosses, Secretary of the Patternmakers, at the 1889 T.U.C. (*Report*, pp. 54-5);

b) and c) are from speeches by D. Holmes, Secretary, Northern Counties Weavers' Association (T.U.C. *Reports*, 1890, p. 49; 1891, p. 76).

a) To his mind those who were in favour of the eight-hours movement were putting the Congress in a very humiliating position indeed in asking those who had successfully fought the nine-hours battle without the aid of Parliament to vote in favour of calling upon the Legislature. . . . Most of the societies had shown that they had been fully competent to deal successfully with the questions as to hours and remuneration. He knew there was great difficulty in getting the [unorganised] workers to join themselves in permanent combinations; but there was comparatively little difficulty in getting them to take part in a temporary combination and if they could get the non-union men to join in a movement in favour of an eight-hours day, they would be strong enough to attain the object in view. . . . During 1887 they had imported into this country manufactured goods to the extent of £80,000,000. These goods had been produced by foreigners, who worked a very much longer day than the people in this country did. What

would be the effect if they almost doubled the cost of production in this country by limiting themselves to an eight-hours day? They would immensely increase the consumption of foreign manufactured goods. There was likewise a question of wages. . . . Most of the skilled trades were paid so much per hour. A reduction of working hours would result in a very considerable decrease in their wages. . . . He should have far more sympathy with a resolution in favour of the restriction of overtime. . . .

b) Mr. Holmes (Burnley) stated that he represented about 400,000 persons engaged in textile manufactures, and they did not want to say that eight hours was not very desirable. They who could get it, let them get it; but he hoped they would not expect that the textile trades were going for the eight hours till in India and our other colonies they were down to the same level. . . . He asked them to be careful and to hesitate before enforcing eight hours in the textile trades during the present condition of affairs. . . .

c) The trade with which he was connected was entirely built upon foreign export. Its very existence depended on foreign export and until foreign cheap labour was brought nearer the English level, the textile trade could not bear such a change.

87. NEW UNIONISTS LOOK AT LONDON TRADES COUNCIL

From T. Mann and Ben Tillett, *The "New" Trades Unionism*,
1890. See also No. 79.

IN our opinion [the London Trades Council] ought to be the most valuable institution in London to the workers of all grades and either sex. It should be, it might be, aye, and we venture to say, it shall be the real centre of organised industry in the Metropolitan area. The work performed by it should be of such a character that no genuine labour organisation could justify its conduct if it did not become affiliated. London's Labour Parliament,

nothing less, where every affiliated union having a difficulty could turn to for, and obtain, real and substantial help. The Trades Council should have, and must have its subcommittees for extending organisation among those yet unorganised. Educational meetings should be held to spread the principles of trade unionism on the soundest basis. If further financial resources are required, the organised trades of the Metropolis are quite prepared to grant that aid so soon as they are satisfied that such finances will be used to the advantages of the workers.

The fact is, the older section represented by Mr. Shipton has no real desire to see trade unionism become the all-powerful instrument for abolishing poverty; or if they do they have never yet succeeded in making it known. . . .

We contend that a new zeal is required. We say, and say fearlessly, that these "old school" men have failed to spread these trade union principles, and we further say that one of two things must happen, viz: That reactionists must at once alter or clear out. We take full responsibility for what we say in this matter, and are willing to face the consequences. Our contention is that at least 500,000 of London's workers might be organised in *bona fide* labour organisations, that these might be affiliated to the London Trades Council, and that if this were so, an enormous change for the better would soon come about. . . .

The 700,000 London workers yet outside trade unionism should be especially catered for, model rules should be drawn up by the Council on a scientific basis to suit the various grades of workers, specimen copies of account books should be provided, and the Council should depute some of its members to "coach" new officers. If this were done it would save many a union from serious difficulties; and surely such work comes well within the province of a Trades Council.

88. THE ENGINEERS ALTER THEIR RULES, 1892

The A.S.E. (of which prominent new unionists like Burns, Mann, Hammill, etc., were members) is the chief example of the adjustment of an "old" union to the demands of new unionism. By 1892 Tom Mann came within a few votes of winning the secretaryship, and a Delegate Meeting admitted new classes of engineering workers, by relaxing age and apprenticeship standards and welcoming certain semi-skilled men. In 1896 a new unionist, *George Barnes*, became General Secretary. Membership increased by over 20,000 in the next five years. Extract *a*) is from a recruiting leaflet, *To All Classes of Workmen in the Engineering Industry*, 1892; *b*) is from the address of W. Harmston in the A.S.E. election of a General Secretary, 1898, after the lock-out of 1897 (see No. 136), *Nominations*, p. 23. Harmston was not elected.

a) WE, as Trade Unionists, cannot too highly commend the sentiments which have prompted the promotion of [the old exclusive unions]; but at the same time we cannot disguise the fact that the absence of a young and vigorous membership has rendered these Societies liable to the most fatal of all objections, "financial insecurity" and that divided interests weaken . . . their efforts . . . for . . . "Progress." . . .

Having these objects in view, our delegate meeting held in Leeds in June, 1892 . . . gave the subject of more perfect organisation their special consideration and after lengthy and exhaustive discussion, founded on practical experience and knowledge of trade customs, decided to remove all barriers that prevented or retarded the admission into our society of any workman, who in following the engineering trade, can claim to be a skilled artisan. . . .

b) AN OLD UNIONIST SHAKES HIS HEAD

I would ask all my brothers to take up the history of our society from the year 1892, when that fatal Leeds delegate meeting changed our character of peaceable defenders of our rights for that of industrial jingoes. Then the New Unionism, that was to be the forerunner of our millennium . . . was ushered into existence. . . .

89. THE WORKERS' UNION: UNITY OF SKILLED AND UNSKILLED

The Workers' Union, later amalgamated with the Transport and General Workers Union, was founded with the help of Tom Mann in 1898. Its first Secretary was his fellow engineer, Charles Duncan. The extract is from the (hostile) *Trade Unionist*, November, 1898.

THE fact is as a Trade Union [the Workers' Union] is an impossibility, though it may have some limited success as a political organisation. To start a society with the avowed object of embracing all sections, skilled or unskilled, organised or unorganised . . . can but bring upon the scheme the condemnation of all supporters of regular combination. Because the labourer and the artisan are both equally men and brothers it is no reason why they should not each have separate societies—federated, if you will—to deal with questions peculiar to themselves. It is just this attempt to obliterate all craft landmarks which works so much mischief. The inevitable alternative to Trade Societies is those labour-political bodies, which soon after the London Dock Strike sprung up, usually with a well-educated political leader as prime mover and an early strike as the objective.

90. SOCIALISTS AND TRADE UNIONS, 1893

Extract a) is an example of the Social Democratic Federation's sectarian attitude towards trade unions. In principle, this was reversed in 1897; in practice, it had been modified after the late '80s, but the change was never whole-hearted. Pete Curran (*d.*, 1910), prominent in the New Unionism (Gasworkers' Union), and the I.L.P., was M.P. for Jarrow, 1907-10. b) Expresses the *Clarion* attitude.

a) is from the *Daily Chronicle*, June 26th, 1893; b) from Robert Blatchford's *Merrie England*, 1895 Edition, p. 199.

a) ON Saturday evening at the Central Hall of the S.D.F. . . . a debate took place between Mr. Pete Curran of the Tinworkers' Union and Mr. William White of the S.D.F. on the question, "Should Socialists support Trade

Unions?" Mr. Curran said that the great change that had come about during recent years in the spirit of the Trade Union movement was ample justification for Socialists supporting Trade Unions, even though they might not agree with all they did, and would often wish them to go farther. Mr. White, in reply, said that the action of Trade Unionists tended rather to patch up and perpetuate the present system than to end it. Moreover, it created an aristocracy of labour, on the one hand, and facing them in opposition, an ignorant, unemployed, blackleg class on the other. Both of these were distasteful to Socialists, and both must be swept away before the workers could feel that class consciousness necessary to his emancipation, which he contended could come through Social Democracy alone.

b) The older unionists think that Trade Unionism is strong enough in itself to secure the rights of the workers. This is a great mistake. The rights of the worker are the whole of the produce of his labour. Trade Unionism not only cannot secure that, but has never even tried to secure that. The most that Trade Unionism has secured, or can ever hope to secure for the workers, is a comfortable subsistence wage. They have not always even secured that much, and when they have secured it, the cost has been serious. For the great weapon of Unionism is the strike, and a strike is at best a bitter, a painful and a costly thing.

Do not think that I am opposed to Trade Unionism. It is a good thing. It has long been the only defence of the workers against robbery and oppression; were it not for the Trade Unionism of the past and of the present, the condition of the British industrial classes would be one of abject slavery. But Trade Unionism, although some defence, is not sufficient defence.

You must remember, also, that the employers have copied the methods of Trade Unionism. They also have organised and united, and in the future strikes will be more terrible and more costly than ever. The Capitalist

is the stronger. He holds the better strategic position. He can always outlast the worker, for the worker has to starve and see his children starve, and the Capitalist never gets to that pass. Besides, capital is more mobile than labour. A stroke of the pen will divert wealth and trade from one end of the country to the other; but the workers cannot move their forces so readily.

One difference between Socialism and Trade Unionism is that whereas the Unions can only marshal and arm the workers, for a desperate trial of endurance, Socialism can get rid of the Capitalist altogether. The former helps you to resist the enemy, the latter destroys him.

D) International

91. SOLIDARITY, 1887

This period is rich in international labour action. The Socialist International was founded in 1889 and the first international May Day celebrated in 1890. A number of trade union internationals of a stable sort were formed in the '90s (leather-workers, glass-workers, clothing-workers, tobacco and, most important, the miners and transport workers); in 1901 the International Federation of Trade Unions was set up. In these bodies two trends combined: the anti-Socialist "old" unionists, who favoured them because, like British business men, they were worried about foreign competition and undercutting, and the militant Socialists and "new" unionists. Once again the eight-hour day provided the link between the two. The extract is from the Presidential Address at the 1887 Swansea T.U.C., by W. Bevan, President, Swansea Trades Council, *Reynolds's Newspaper*, September 11th, 1887.

SPEAKING of the International Trade Congress he said it was absolutely necessary that a common platform should be arranged whereby English and continental workmen could co-operate for mutual protection. The march of commerce and the discoveries of science were fast breaking down the barriers of mountains and seas. The forces of capital never slept. . . . He ridiculed the boggy Press pictures of Continental Socialism. Socialism had lost its

terrors for them. (*Cheers.*) They recognised their most serious evil in the unrestrained, unscrupulous, and remorseless forces of capital. When the workmen of Europe united on a common line of action, they would be all-powerful. . . . The eight hours' movement would be successful.

92. ORIGIN OF THE MAY DAY DEMONSTRATIONS, 1889-90

From Report to the Delegates of the Brussels International Congress, 1891, by the Gasworkers' and General Labourers' Union, the Legal Eight-Hour Day and International Labour League; the Bloomsbury Socialist Society and the Battersea Labour League, p. 8. Marx's daughter Eleanor and her husband, E. Aveling, were prominent in all these bodies, except the Battersea Labour League.

THE history of the May Day Demonstration in England, as in all other countries, is curious and interesting. The idea of such a demonstration had of course been broached at the Paris International Congress . . . of 1889. Two of those who had been present at this Congress felt it their duty to call the attention of the English workers to the resolution endorsed by the representatives of 22 nations:

" . . . There shall be organised a great International Demonstration on a fixed date, so that in all countries and towns simultaneously on the given day the workers shall demand of the authorities the legal reduction of the working day to eight hours."

The result was that in January, 1890, the Bloomsbury Socialist Society and a week or so later the Gasworkers' and General Labourers' Union decided to carry out a demonstration in Hyde Park in favour of a *Legal Eight-Hour Working Day*. . . .

93. THE FIRST LONDON MAY DAY, 1890

The initiative which brought about the London May Day celebrations and the participation of the new unions of unskilled workers was that of Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling. The participation of the London Trades Council and the "old" unionists, who supported the eight-hour day, but not the "legal" eight-hour day, was due to the efforts of Tom Mann. The extract is from the *Star*, May 5th, 1890. It was estimated that 500,000 people took part in this demonstration.

It seemed as though the whole population of London poured parkwards. . . . One thing the processions demonstrated was the way in which all classes of the workers join hands on the eight hours. There were dockers there in their rough working clothes—the only clothes they have probably—and sandwiched between them hundreds of gentlemen comps, kid-gloved and top-hatted. One spirit animated them all. . . .

From [the Reformers' Tree] one could see both the Marble Arch and Hyde Park Corner, and the great tract of lawn between. Before the processions arrived there were a few thousand people about, looking nothing in the vast space, and round each entrance a thicker crowd waiting to see the processions enter. But when the stream set in by both gates, the black group at each corner began to grow and spread out fan-like over the open space, advancing like great waves up into the Park until the grass was swallowed up and the only prospect was people thick-thronged everywhere . . . and all the time the procession was still coming in. There was the banner of the Postmen's Union. . . . A slight break and up came the dockers, an interminable array with multitudinous banners. . . . Then came a large contingent of women—rope-makers, match-makers and others. Looked at from above they advanced like a moving rainbow, for they all wore the huge feathers of many colors which the East End lass loves to sport when she is out for the day. . . .

94. LIBERAL TRADE UNIONISTS FOR INTERNATIONAL ACTION

From an article by Sam Woods, M.P., Miners' Federation leader, in *The Trade Unionist*, October, 1898.

I AM glad to say that the different sections are now beginning to hold international conferences with representatives of different countries. Only this week the Miners are holding their annual conference in Vienna. . . . Indeed the main efforts of the Trade Unionists of England are now being directed towards the creation of friendly feeling with the same trades on the Continent of Europe and by means of international conferences endeavouring not only to strengthen their position numerically, but also to kill unfair competition, which is the enemy of both capital and labour in this country. And the direction in which this influence is being felt is not so much towards the improvement of the position of the English workman, as to bring the foreigner up to the home standard.

95. INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS

The International Federation of Transport Workers was founded largely through the efforts of British transport unions in 1896, with Tom Mann as President. The following extracts from *Tom Mann's Memoirs*, 1924, pp. 135ff., give an idea of the work in those days.

THE objects aimed at by the Federation were: "The complete organisation of all the men engaged in the occupations named, in order to raise wages, reduce working hours, get gangs properly constituted, check overtime, insist upon adequate inspection of gear, and secure for sailors and firemen proper rations, ample accommodation, and a satisfactory manning scale. Further, the Federation . . . seeks to establish . . . a uniform rate of pay for the same class of work in all ports and to establish a recognised working day and other regulations in the ports in the world. . . ."

Havelock Wilson and I were sent by our Federation,

first to Rotterdam and thence to Antwerp. We accomplished the mission successfully. . . . It was not long, however, before the Belgian authorities endeavoured to stop our activities. In many cases our delegates were arrested on landing at Antwerp. . . . Ben Tillet was arrested and imprisoned. . . .

In November, 1896, I . . . reached Hamburg all right, but early the same day I was arrested. . . . I produced the authorisation, the validity of which was admitted, but . . . the authorisation was withdrawn and an order of expulsion was issued instead. . . . The expulsion served our purpose quite as well as if I had been allowed to address the meetings, probably better. The port workers of Hamburg enrolled rapidly and in December the corn porters attempted negotiations to obtain increased wages. Negotiations failed so they struck work and soon succeeded. Other sections followed. . . . In a few days the port of Hamburg was practically at a standstill, and again they sent to us in London for someone from the Federation to proceed there. Notwithstanding my recent expulsion I went there again in my Presidential capacity. . . . I watched developments for three days. . . . I had been with others visiting each vessel that was working; when the crew could understand English I addressed the men urging them to desist and to make common cause . . . [He was arrested, imprisoned and expelled. In 1897 he got to Paris] and spent the better part of a week addressing what were technically termed private meetings, organised by . . . the Socialists grouped round Jean Allemane, an old Communard. . . .

[Mann was then expelled by the French police and made liable to six months' imprisonment without trial if he returned. After visits to Sweden, Norway and Denmark he went to a number of French ports travelling under another name.]

[At Bordeaux] more than once substantial improvements in wages had been secured. Invariably, however, this had been followed by an influx of Spanish workers, chiefly from Bilbao, who swamped the port with men

willing to work for less than the union rate. This had always frustrated their efforts. . . . I decided to proceed to Bilbao. . . . This kind of running around was necessary in the early days to lay the basis of the International Federation. . . . One visit is worth many letters and a meeting with tactful attention to a few individuals, oftentimes lays the basis for a good understanding.

Part Five

*INDEPENDENT LABOUR AND SOCIALIST
PROPAGANDISTS*

A) Towards Independent Politics

96. A LARGER SHARE IN NATIONAL LIFE

From the Presidential Address by R. D. B. Ritchie (Dundee Trades Council) to the Trades Union Congress, 1889.
Report, p. 17.

WHAT I hope and think worth striving for is that unionism should now begin to demand a larger share in the moulding of national life. Wherever there is corporate existence, there let unionism make its voice heard and respected. With unionist parochial managers, unionist town councillors, unionist magistrates, and unionist members of the legislature, what could not be accomplished? . . . A public opinion would be formed which would once for all place and maintain Labour on its true footing. . . . This is no chimera, no utopia to be realised about the year 3001. All the offices I have named are elective, and the trade unionists have the vote. What is wanted is the concentration of the power of unionism in the proper direction. The Trade Union has penetrated or is penetrating into every town and village almost of the kingdom. . . . In every large centre there is a Trades Council, generally composed of the best men of the unions, and over all there is this Congress. . . . The organisation is complete. There is no state in the country better provided with machinery than this labour state. The local unions are the House of Commons, the Trades Councils are the House of Lords and the Trade Union Congress is the final Court of Appeal.

97. FROM KEIR HARDIE'S ELECTION ADDRESS, MID-LANARK, 1888

From Keir Hardie's candidature in Mid-Lanark (1888) dates the beginning of the "independent labour" drive. It was soon followed by the creation of the Scottish Labour Party (1888), which later joined the I.L.P. Keir Hardie stood as an independent Radical, not as a Socialist.

At present the Members of Parliament returned from Scotland represent the following interests:

Landlords	.	.	.	.	.	18
Lawyers	.	.	.	.	.	21
Merchants	.	.	.	.	.	8
Shipowners	.	.	.	.	.	6
Army	.	.	.	.	.	5
Manufacturers	.	.	.	.	.	3
Schoolmaster.	.	.	.	.	.	1
Doctors	.	.	.	.	.	2
Newspaper proprietor	.	.	.	.	.	1
Brewer	.	.	.	.	.	1
Various Learned Professors	.	.	.	.	.	6
						<hr/> 72

You will thus see that the working men of Scotland have not a representative to urge their claims. It is in order to remedy its admitted grievance that I now claim your support. . . .

You are now in the position of men called upon to decide your own fate. Your lot in life hitherto has been hard and bitter. The commercial classes are now feeling keenly the effects of the poverty which has been yours for so long. Why is it that in the richest nation in the world those who produce the wealth should alone be poor? What help can you expect from those who believe that they can only be kept rich in proportion as you are kept poor?

*"Few save the poor feel for the poor, the rich know not how hard
It is to be of needful food and needful rest debarred."*

I ask you therefore to return to Parliament a man of yourselves who, being poor, can feel for the poor, and whose whole interest lies in the direction of securing for you a better and happier lot. You have the power to return whom you will to Parliament. I only ask you to use that power as a means of securing justice to yourselves, by which you will do injustice to no man.

98. MICHAEL DAVITT TO THE SMETHWICK KNIGHTS OF LABOUR

The Knights of Labour, a body organising all classes of labour, first formed in America and prominent there, had some branches at this time in Britain, chiefly composed of Irish workers. Extract from a speech of Michael Davitt, the *Star*, May 14th, 1888. See also No. 26.

It was impossible . . . for full justice to be done to the cause of labor under present conditions. Millions toil all day long and a few idlers take the larger share of the proceeds of their labor. A single scavenger, no matter how dirty, is worth more to society than a thousand idlers. To rectify this state of affairs the industrial classes must be represented by men of their own ranks; landlords and lawyers are not such fools as to choose working-men for their representatives, and the working-men must not choose landlords and lawyers. But for this purpose organisation is necessary, and that organisation must aim first at transferring the machinery of the State to the workers by universal adult-suffrage. When this is done landlordism must be attacked.

99. APPEAL FOR AN INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY, 1889

Extract from a *Manifesto* of the Labour Union, August, 1889. This was a typical but short-lived effort—one of many between 1888 and 1893—to form an independent Labour party. It was supported by Keir Hardie, some Left Radicals and some former Socialist Leaguers; its chief pamphlet, *The Labour Programme*, 1888, showed the influence of Engels' writings. The appeal here to trade unionists and co-operators is noteworthy.

IN appealing to the workers to form an INDEPENDENT POLITICAL PARTY the LABOUR UNION points to what the Irish have achieved by a similar course of action. The misery of the Irish people was ignored while their leaders waited on the Liberal and Tory parties. As soon as the Irish movement began to assert itself as an independent factor in politics it compelled consideration, and the Liberals within a few years threw over Coercion and adopted the Home Rule programme. . . .

Working class political parties, trade combinations and co-operative societies are being formed by the workers of every nation to obtain economic freedom, and it is our hope that British workmen who have so persistently fought the battle of labour against capital in trade unions and as co-operators, will no longer consent to be the tools of capital in the world of politics, but will enrol themselves under the banner of LABOUR to make the Government and Legislature of Great Britain instruments of social regeneration.

The LABOUR UNION appeals especially to organised Labour for help in forming an INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY. . . .

100. THE BRADFORD LABOUR UNION

The Bradford Labour Union was formed in May, 1891, arising out of the six months' Manningham strike in Bradford, which precipitated independent political labour organisation in the West Riding. Other labour unions of this type were formed about the same time (e.g. in Colne Valley and Salford). In other places the Trades Councils took over similar functions. From 1891-3 this spontaneous movement gathered considerable strength. Extract from the Constitution of the Bradford Labour Union.

1. THIS Association shall be called the Bradford and District Labour Union.

2. Its objects shall be to promote the interests of the working men in whatever way it may from time to time be thought advisable, and to further the cause of direct Labour representation on local bodies and in Parliament.

3. Its operations shall be carried on irrespective of the convenience of any political party. Persons holding official positions in connection with political organisations shall not be eligible for membership, and members of the Labour Union accepting positions in any political association shall thereby forfeit their membership.

101. FABIAN SCEPTICISM, 1891

Extracts from replies sent to the *Workman's Times* in answer to an article advocating "A Workman's Party," January 9th, 1891. a) is from E. R. Pease, Secretary of the Fabian Society; b) from Sidney Webb.

a) WHETHER we should endeavour to form a party of our own or whether we should endeavour to influence and ultimately capture existing organisations, is purely a matter of expediency. In England the attempts of Socialists at independent action have hitherto been disastrous failures, and I do not see much prospect of rapid success in this direction.

b) The chief difficulty I feel is the apparent impossibility, as yet, of getting any effective party together. The nature

of an Englishman seems to be suited only to a political fight between two parties—the party of order, and the party of progress.

102. THE NAME OF THE PARTY

Extract from the *Report* of the foundation Congress of the I.L.P., Bradford, 1893, p. 3.

MR. GEORGE CARSON, Glasgow, moved that the title of the party should be the Socialist Labour Party. In Scotland the Labour Party had come to the conclusion that it was best to call a spade a spade.

Mr. R. Smillie, Larkhall, seconded the motion.

Mr. H. A. Barker, London, moved as an amendment that the title of the party should be the Independent Labour Party of Great Britain and Ireland. He said that they had to appeal to the vast mass of workers outside, and not only to Socialists. It would be a pity if they narrowed their party in the slightest degree by making it appear that they admitted only *bona fide* Socialists.

Mr. Settle, Manchester, seconded the amendment.

Mr. Wolfe, Colne Valley, said that the Labour Parties in Germany, France, America and in every country where those parties had been most successful were called Social Democrats—everywhere except England.

Mr. J. Burgess, London, said whilst he sincerely hoped it would not be supposed that anybody in that Conference was anti-Socialistic, it was perfectly clear to him that to demand a declaration as a Socialist from all the members of the party would merely be to stop the development of the army of workers, upon whom they were relying and ought to rely.

103. BLATCHFORD ON LABOUR REPRESENTATION

Merrie England, by Blatchford, a reprint of articles published in the *Clarion*, was the most powerful piece of Socialist propaganda in this period, and a pamphlet of genius. One million copies of a penny edition were sold in a few months, 1894-5; its influence was immense. The extract below, from the 1895 Edition, p. 197, is a good example of early I.L.P. policy.

For the *Clarion* see No. 123.

BEING a practical man, John, you will naturally say to me that having told you what I believe to be the true solution of the Social Problem, I ought to show some plan for working that solution out.

I think that the best way to realise Socialism is—to make Socialists. I have always maintained that if we can once get the people to understand how much they are wronged we may safely leave the remedy in their own hands. My work is to teach Socialism, to get recruits for the Socialist Army. I am not a general, but a recruiting sergeant. The most useful thing you can do is to join the recruiting staff yourself, and enlist as many volunteers as possible. Give us a Socialistic people, and Socialism will accomplish itself.

However, I may as well say a few words on the subject of Labour representation. The old struggles have been for political emancipation. The coming struggle will be for industrial emancipation. We want England for the English. We want the fruits of labour for those who produce them. This issue is not an issue between Liberals and Tories, it is an issue between Labourers and Capitalists. Neither of the political parties is of any use to the workers, because both . . . are paid, officered and led by Capitalists whose interests are opposed to the interests of the workers. The Socialist laughs at the pretended friendship of Liberal and Tory leaders for the workers. These Party Politicians do not in the least understand what the rights, the interests, or the desires of the workers are; if they did understand they would oppose them implacably. The demand of the Socialist is a demand for the nationalisation of the land and all other instruments of production

and distribution. The Party leaders will not hear of such a thing. . . .

Well, my advice to you working men is to return workmen representatives, with definite and imperative instructions, to Parliament and to all other governing bodies.

Some of the old Trade Unionists will tell you that there is no need for Parliamentary interference in Labour matters. The Socialist does not ask for "parliamentary interference," he asks for Government by the people and for the people. . . .

I suggest to you, John, that you should join a Socialist Society, and help to get others to join, and that you should send Socialist workers to sit upon all representative bodies.

The Socialist tells you that you are men with men's rights and with men's capacities for all that is good and great—and you hoot him and call him a liar and a fool.

The Politician despises you, declares that all your sufferings are due to your own vices, and that you are incapable of managing your own affairs, and that if you were entrusted with freedom and the use of the wealth you create you would degenerate into a lawless mob of drunken loafers, and you cheer him until you are hoarse.

The Politician tells you that *his* party is the people's party, and that *he* is the man to defend your interests, and in spite of all you know of his conduct in the past you believe him.

The Socialist begs you to form a party of your own, and to do your work yourself, and you write him down as a knave.

To be a Trade Unionist and fight for your class during a strike, and to be a Tory or Liberal and fight against your class at an election is folly. During a strike there are no Tories or Liberals amongst the strikers; they are all workers. At election times there are no workers; only Liberals and Tories.

You never elect an employer as president of a Trades Council; or as chairman of a Trade Union Congress; or as member of a Trade Union. You never ask an employer to

lead you during a strike. But at election times, when you ought to stand by your class, the whole body of Trade Union workers turn into blacklegs, and fight for the Capitalists and against the workers. . . .

I say to you then, . . . John Smith, that the most practical thing you can do is to erase the words Liberal and Tory from your vocabulary, write Socialist in the place, and resolve that henceforward you will elect only Labour Representatives and *see that they do their duty*.

B) Local Government: Problems and Action

104. THE CO-OP AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

From Beatrice Potter, *The Co-operative Movement*, 1891, p. 189.

No one who is intimately acquainted with a North Country or Scotch manufacturing and mining district or with a Midland village will underrate the national importance of the store as a training school for citizenship in its widest sense. In urban districts not yet become or recently transformed into municipal boroughs, the "Co-op Shop" serves or has served, as the sole form of local self-government beyond the election of the Board of Guardians and the Vestry. Here you will discover the position of President or Committee man of the Co-operative Society is more prized than that of mayor or alderman in a wealthy city; and is accepted as the outward and visible sign of the esteem and the confidence of the majority of the inhabitants.

105. ELECTION FUND FOR LABOUR CANDIDATES, 1889

School Boards. Before education was taken over by local councils, it was managed by School Boards elected for the purpose. These and the Boards of Guardians which looked after poor relief, were generally the first bodies on which Labour candidates succeeded in getting themselves elected. The 1888 School Board election in Newcastle marked the beginning of the movement for independent Socialist labour candidates in local elections, which was to achieve a good deal of success in the 1890's. By 1897 the I.L.P. had about 250 councillors (ten in Glasgow). The extract is from the *Daily Chronicle*, quoted by the *Labour Elector*, January 26th, 1889.

IN consequence of the many imputations which have been made as to the alleged employment of "Tory money" derived from mysterious sources in aid of their candidature, Messrs. Laidler, Hill and Stewart, the successful labour candidates at the recent School Board Election in Newcastle, ask us to publish the subjoined list of all the moneys they received in aid of their election fund, and a statement as to how the total was expended:

"*Income* . . . Atkinson, labourer, 2s. 6d.; George Wright, labourer, 2s.; Elijah Copland, wood-carver, 2s. 6d.; John Hepple, signalman, 1s.; Hugh Sinclair, tinsmith, 1s. 6d.; Thomas Wright, 2s.; Robert Blower, painter, 6d.; H. Fulthorpe, waterman, 1s. 6d.; Thomas Woods, tinsmith, 5s.; R. W. Crewe, 1s.; Appelby, joiner, 1s.; Tucker, miner, 2s. 6d.; Greenwell, grocer, 2s. 6d.; Scott's workmen, 2s. 6d. . . . Total receipts, £6 2s. 5d.

"*Expenditure:* Mr. Barnes, printing, £3 19s.; Mr. Bartlett for billposting, 13s. 6d.; Mr. Richey for posting, 11s. 6d. Total expenditure, £5 4s. . . ."

It may be added that, perhaps never before in the history of electioneering have 41,000 votes been polled at a total cost of £5 4s.

106. AN EARLY I.L.P.-ER'S ELECTION ADDRESS,
1893

From Ben Turner's *About Myself*, 1928, pp. 171-2. Turner was elected to the Batley Town Council, Yorks, in 1893 and later became M.P. and Sir Benjamin Turner.

If elected I would, if opportunity presented itself, oppose any more back-to-back houses being built in already crowded places. Scientists of the highest character are against back-to-back houses, and having lived in them I appreciate their wisdom and judgment. Property owners and men of means don't live in back-to-back houses, nor at the rate of 200 persons to the acre as in some places in Batley, and there is no need and no reason why the workers (who are of the same flesh and blood as they), should be crowded in unhealthy dwellings. I would go in for artisans' dwellings on the most improved principle.

I am an advocate of wide streets, and big causeways, good lighting, paving flagging, and sewerage, and would also favour a proposal to place trees in our streets, and seats to sit on, believing that it would be conducive to the happiness and comfort of the inhabitants.

The genuine unemployed should have my sympathy, and, if it were possible, I should go in for work of a useful character being found them at men's wages.

I would favour the reduction of public-houses and beer-houses, believing that there are too many from either the public's or the publican's standpoint. I would, however, insist on justice being done to bona fide tenants. No settlement of the liquor question, however, to me, is satisfactory that does not provide for the town itself being its own public-house of refreshment, and entertainment keeper, so that by the natural order following good Government, adulterated drinks of all kinds can be abolished and drunkenness, crime and immorality reduced.

I would favour a proposal that would tax the ground landlord for improvements done to—what he calls his land—by other people, and I think it a moral crime that any man should manipulate land for his own, and not

the country's good. If elected I would do my best for the borough and its inhabitants.

107. THE POOR LAW

The infamous "New Poor Law" of 1834, then still in full force, had three principles: *a*) no relief outside the work-house; *b*) all relief to be "less eligible" than the worst that could be expected outside; *c*) separation of man and wife. Work (normally stone-breaking) had to be done at the work-house for outdoor relief. The Poor Law was till 1929 administered by locally elected Boards of Guardians; workers and Socialists were soon to get themselves elected on them and thus to soften the rigours of the law. This happened, for instance, in Poplar, where Will Crooks and George Lansbury became Guardians in the '90s. The extract is from the evidence of George Edwards (No. 72) before the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor, 1895, XIV, 6,471.

THE first case I have is in the South Erpingham Union, or Aylsham as we understand it. In the year 1887, two brothers, Robert and William Stokes, living at Wood Dalling in Norfolk, their ages were, respectively, 58 and 60 years; were summoned before the Reepham bench of magistrates by the Aylsham Board of Guardians, for not contributing to their mother's maintenance. Robert answered to the summons; William did not, through being sick, lame and unable to walk. William, 58 years of age, had been earning 8s. a week for some months. Robert was not in good bodily health, and had been out of work for some time. Both had wives and families and at the time were heavily in debt: both were members of friendly societies... both were sentenced to a fortnight's imprisonment.

108. UNEMPLOYED KEEP AWAY FROM POOR RELIEF: PONTYPOOL

From evidence before the Select Committee on Distress through Want of Employment, 1895, IX, 4,124-31. The witness came from Pontypool.

PEOPLE, rather than come upon your relief committee in any way whatever, have practically been living on their

savings for all this length of time? [Eighteen months and more—ED.]—Yes.

Can you give a typical case to the Committee of that?—Yes. I was given a case by a father of a family only about a week ago; he told me that he had saved £280 and that it had all been spent.

Can you say in what period of time he had saved that amount of money?—He was an old man of 60, and he has sons working.

It would be the savings of a lifetime?—I should say so.

In that case all the savings are gone?—There has been great sickness in the house and it has all gone.

As to the local resources, is it the case that hitherto one class of operatives, say the miners, for example, who are better off, have rendered assistance to the tin-plate workers, and the tin-plate workers to the miners; that is each class has rendered the other considerable mutual aid?—Yes, immense. . . .

But in your district you appear to be in this unfortunate position that you have all the industries, coal, iron and tin-plate out of employment now?—[Yes.]

109. OLD AGE AND THE WORKHOUSE

From the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor, 1895,
XV, 15,409-31.

b) How old were you when you went into the Wandsworth Workhouse?—65. . . .

We have now to ask you about the aged poor; those about 60.—They have to go and pick oakum for 8 hours a day, in twisting little pieces of corded string for 8 hours a day until the people nearly become imbecile; they do not know what to do.

Up to what age are they kept at this work?—They are kept at this from 65 until—well there were some there 70. There was one man there 79, at least he said he was.

And were they all alike, worked for 8 hours a day?—8 hours a day; they have a quarter of an hour to go out and smoke a pipe. . . .

Did you find the work severe?—No, not severe; monotonous. You did not know what to do. You could not go out to write a letter, or to read, or to do anything: you had no time of your own; in fact it was a place of punishment, not relief. . . .

Did you ever attempt, during those hours of work, to read?—Yes.

A newspaper or book?—Read a newspaper.

What was done to you . . .?—Nothing was done to me, but I was threatened with bread and water. They gave 24 hours; they could do so. . . .

They punished you by putting you on bread and water, I understand?—They did so to others; they only threatened me.

110. A SMALL TOWN IS NOT REHOUSED

From the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, 1885, XXX. Evidence of Dr. W. H. J. Brown, 8,256-73.

THERE is a death-rate in Alnwick [Northumberland] of nearly 22 per 1,000, is there not?—The death-rate was 24.2 while I was there. . . .

Will you state to the Commission what, in your opinion, is the reason for this mortality in a place of that kind, where there is no unhealthy trade, and will you state the conditions of overcrowding which exist in Alnwick?—I believe the high death-rate to be due to the visitation of infectious diseases; the want of isolation; the prevalence of children's disease, aggravated, if not in many instances caused, by the breathing of impure air, arising from the filthy decomposing matters, animal or vegetable, placed and collected in the middens, . . . to ground overcrowding of tenemented properties in narrow yards; and to overcrowding. Castle Inn Yard: Jas. Orange, one room, 12½ by 10 by 7½ high, two adults, and four children. Jas. Donohoe, one room, 13 by 10 by 7½, three adults. Michael Mavin, one room, 17 by 10¼ by 7, three adults and five children, 3 of whom sleep in Donohoes. Hugh Taylor has two

rooms and closet, (1) $18\frac{1}{4}$ by $12\frac{1}{2}$ by $6\frac{1}{2}$ high, seven adults; (2) $15\frac{1}{2}$ by 4 by 7 (closet), two adults; (3) 12 by 12 by 9, six adults.

Do you mean to say they have only one room?—They have only one room, with the exception of Taylor.

Is that common at all in Alnwick?—It is very common in Alnwick. . . .

What is there in the nature of their work which prevents [the workers of Alnwick] living a little way out?—Nothing, only they cannot get houses elsewhere.

What is the reason of their being unable to get houses?—I do not know. . . .

Is the property chiefly in a very few hands round Alnwick?—The property round Alnwick is chiefly in the hands of the Duke of Northumberland.

Has there been any attempt made by the local board to remedy this state of things?—There has not.

Are the members of the local board interested in this kind of property themselves?—Yes, I fear they are, indirectly. . . .

Did you find them hampering you when you were Medical Officer there?—I did. They were not ready to carry out any improvements because I believe they thought they would be letting the owners in for some expense, which they perhaps may not have considered necessary.

111. LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN STOKE GIFFORD, 1896

From a "Red Van" Report,^a of the English Land Restoration League, 1896. Under the Adoptive Acts referred to below, parish councils had certain powers, e.g. to light the village with oil, gas or electricity, if they adopted the Acts for these purposes.

STOKE GIFFORD is a parish in Gloucestershire about five miles from Bristol. The . . . Duke of Beaufort . . . is lord of the manor, sole land "owner" and patron of the living.

The population of the parish in 1891 was 364; as the only industry is agriculture, and the Duke owns all the land, every man, woman and child in the village is

absolutely at his mercy. Under the Local Government Act, 1894, Stoke Gifford obtained a Parish Council. Last year's election took place at a parish meeting by show of hands—there was no poll—with His Grace, the Duke in the chair. Three of the Duke's farmers and one labourer were chosen. . . . The Parish Council, as a matter of course, chose His Grace as its chairman. It is said that the Council meets at the vicarage. There are no allotments whatever. The Labourers pay from £2 2s. to £6 for cottages, mostly described as three-roomed tumbledown structures with large gardens, but no drainage. . . . The Council has done nothing. None of the Adoptive Acts have been adopted. . . . No rate has been levied. One special parish meeting has been held: to consider plans for the restoration of the Parish Church. . . .

The Parish is represented on the District Council by the Vicar—appointed to the living in 1873 by the noble Duke. The District Council appears to have been as inactive as the Parish. The "National" School of the parish is managed by the Duke and his parson.

112. PROGRESSIVES IN LONDON

The Progressive Party, a broad Liberal coalition of small businessmen and traders, Nonconformists, working-class Radicals and enemies of the City monopolists, dominated the London County Council from its start in 1889 until 1907, and was supported by the most influential London Socialists. After 1907 its place was gradually taken by the London Labour Party. In the 1890s its aggressive (though not very successful) fight for municipal rights put it at the head of the movement for local government reform in the country. John Burns and Sidney Webb were among its most active members, Webb drafting its programme. The extracts below from the *Star*, March 7th, 1892, give an idea of its earlier crusading spirit. "Westminster, Wemyss and Bung" stand for landlords and liquor trade, i.e. the Tories.

a) ELECTION CAMPAIGN SONG, 1892

[THIS election resulted in a Progressive and Labour triumph and marked the high-watermark of the Party's influence]:

TA-RA-RA-BOOM-DE-AY

... You should see the sweater's den—
Hungry women, starving men,
Packed like sheep within a pen!
Taste their food and drink, and then
Make the forward program known;
Slums demolished, stock and stone;
Sharks and sweaters overthrown:
London makes that cause her own!

b) VICTORY HEADLINES:

LONDON

AWAKENED, GIVES A GLORIOUS VICTORY TO THE PRO-
GRESSIVE CAUSE

THE RAGGED ARMY OF WESTMINSTER, WEMYSS AND BUNG,
IS UTTERLY ROUTED

THE BATTALIONS OF THE CARPET-BAGGING BARRISTERS ARE
BEATEN BACK

THE CHAMPIONS OF ALL THE INTERESTS ARE CRUSHED BY
THE CHOSEN OF THE PEOPLE

HURRAH! likewise HOORAY!

THE CAMPAIGN OF CALUMNY ENDS IN THE VICTORY OF TRUTH
PITY THE POOR DUKES

113. LOCAL LABOUR CANDIDATES,

1898

The latter part of the '90s saw a great increase in Labour and Socialist election activity, and notable advances, chiefly by the I.L.P. West Ham was the first place to achieve a Labour majority (November, 1898). The extract from the *West Ham Herald*, October 29th, 1898, gives a good idea both of the programme and the political appeal of these candidates.

MESSRS. *Scott* and *Terrett* are the Socialist, Labour and Trade Union candidates in Stratford ward, and they issue a joint address. There may be differences of opinion

as to the measures advocated by these two candidates, but a better-written address has never been published in West Ham. It lays great stress upon the importance of the housing of the working classes, the municipalisation of the tramways, and a fair wages clause in contracts. Other points are: Trade union wages, trade union hours, no sweating, municipal water supply. The concluding paragraph may be quoted:

"We venture to address our appeals to every class of reformer. To the Radical and Progressive, because the only party on the West Ham Town Council which is carrying out a similar policy to the Progressives on the London County Council is the Labour Group; to the Temperance advocate, because healthier homes mean greater sobriety; to the Trade Unionist, because united political action must now largely supersede isolated individual action; to the Socialist, because in municipal progress and development will be found the line of least resistance to the political, social and industrial emancipation of the working masses."

114. VICTORY AND RETROSPECT: WEST HAM

From Will Thorne's speech after the Labour victory in West Ham, 1898. *West Ham Herald*, November 26th, 1898. For Thorne, see Nos. 65, 66. The winning coalition in West Ham included all shades of Socialists under S.D.F. leadership, though normally the I.L.P. was the most successful in this work.

What he wanted to see was the trade unions and the socialists become more closely identified than they were at present. Personally he did not think they had anything to lose. . . . Since the Gasworkers' Union had been started in consequence of the work of men like Pete Curran and himself . . . a very large number of their members had been converted to the principles of social democracy. Perhaps he was not one of the best exponents of social-democracy, but still he had done his best. . . . He was

the chairman of the Labour Group in West Ham . . . he had endeavoured to unite the various sections of the workers in West Ham, and to a large extent they had been successful. . . . Personally he believed there was grit in the people if only they could be fetched out of their shells. In 1884 he joined the Social Democratic Federation, and there was only Coun. Skelton and himself left of that party that he could remember. He had done his very best to make the conditions of the people better. In South West Ham there were really but three parties—the trades unionists, the socialists and the Irish party. If they could manage to keep those three parties together they could sweep the board at every election. . . . In conclusion, Coun. Thorne said that he hoped that as long as he remained in the movement he would never turn renegade but continue to do his best on behalf of the toiling masses.

C) *The Propagandists*

115. SELLING LITERATURE

Extract a) is from H. M. Hyndman, *The Record of an Adventurous Life*, 1911, p. 334; b) from H. W. Lee, *Social Democracy in Britain*, 1935, p. 58.

a) THOSE were the days when none of us were above doing anything. We distributed bills, took collections, bawled ourselves hoarse at street-corners and sold *Justice* down Fleet Street and the Strand. This last was really a most extraordinary venture.

It was a curious scene. Morris in his soft hat and blue suit, Champion, Frost and Joynes in the morning garments of the well-to-do, several working-men comrades and I myself, wearing the new frock-coat in which Shaw said I was born, with a tall hat and good gloves, all earnestly engaged in selling a penny Socialist paper during the busiest time of day in London's busiest thoroughfare.

b) *Justice* appeared on January 19th, 1884. . . . Its greatest

"snag" was distribution. Wholesale agents would scarcely look at it. It had mainly to rely upon sales at meetings. Those who could manage it took copies to newsagents one week, and collected the unsold copies and the money due—when there was any—the following week. I did that job for six months, and on some occasions I had back all the copies and no money! When three or four copies were sold at one newsagent's I was simply delighted. It was not every newsagent who would take on the sale of the paper, even when it was brought to him, and some soon dropped it like hot cakes when they found that it had to do more with revolution than with law! I went dinnerless each Thursday for that six months, and I was not at all sorry to give it up when the three newsagents of my group who still took the paper were at last able to get it earlier through one of the smaller wholesalers. What I did was typical in a small way of what a number of other members did in London and the larger provincial centres. For instance, a member of the Marylebone Branch, T. Finn, would stand outside Gower Street Station on Thursday mornings to catch the people on their way to work. He worked up a small regular sale of *Justice* by the very persistence with which he stuck to it.

116. SOME S.D.F. PIONEERS

From H. W. Lee, *Social Democracy in Britain*, 1935, pp. 83, 85, 87, 121. For H. W. Lee, see No. 28.

[*Harry Quelch.*] From a packer at a wallpaper manufacturer's in Cannon St., in the City of London, at 25/- a week, on which he maintained a home and an increasing family, he became one of the literary giants of the Socialist Movement. His knowledge of French and German, which he acquired by dint of laborious study in the little leisure which he allowed himself, gave him an international insight which few of us possessed. . . . For years Quelch edited *Justice* voluntarily while working as a packer, doing much propaganda work in addition. . . . When he first appeared on the platform his style of speech was heavy,

hesitant, and unrelieved by even a gleam of humour. . . . Those who listened to his intensely interesting addresses 20 years later, when his sallies and retorts drew shouts of laughter from large audiences will scarcely believe that Quelch ever suffered from lack of expression or gift of repartee.

[*J. Hunter Watts.*] He was a Radical who contributed to *The Republican* from 1877 to 1881. . . . He came over to us some years later when he joined the Fabian Society. . . . Though a great admirer of William Morris, Watts remained with the S.D.F. at the split of 1884. . . . No one could have been animated with greater missionary zeal for the Socialist cause. . . . I have known him go out alone into some poverty-stricken East End district of London and with a flag and a box break new ground and hold a meeting in the open air if he could keep a dozen or so people around him.

[*Jack Williams.*] "Never an agitation, never a strike, never an open-air debate in this metropolis, nor indeed anywhere throughout the country where his services could be useful, but Jack Williams has been well to the front. Always vigorous, always ready to do the hardest and least advertised work." [Quoted from a tribute by Hyndman.]

[*John Fielding.*] The risks he took were considerable. He was a verbatim shorthand writer. If the craftsman literally took his job in his hands whenever he made himself prominent in the Socialist movement in its early days, the "black coated" worker was almost certain to lose his position, perhaps never to get back to anything of the same kind. Fielding might have been arrested in connection with the free-speech struggle at Dod Street, Limehouse, while his parliamentary candidature at Kennington brought him prominently . . . to the fore. He had spoken at unemployed demonstrations as well as at many of the weekly propaganda meetings in London. Finally . . . [to save his job Fielding] decided to transfer his energies to provincial centres. This activity meant spending most week-ends away from home, often with night travelling. . . .

117. TO THE UNEMPLOYED, 1886

This extract from one of John Burns' speeches in the long S.D.F. series of unemployed campaigns (1884-8) is a sample of the insurrectionary propaganda which was used in perorations by some very early Socialists. Burns became well known as "the man with the red flag." The meeting (Trafalgar Square, February 8th, 1886) was followed by some rioting, many windows being broken in the West End; middle-class opinion was thrown into a panic. The S.D.F. leaders, Hyndman, Champion, Burns and Williams, were arrested and tried for seditious conspiracy at the Old Bailey. They were acquitted. From the *Times Weekly Edition*, February 12th, 1886.

THE whole of the square where the fountains are was densely packed with people. . . . There was a great roar of voices as *the man with the red flag* mounted the stonework overlooking the square, and all faces which had previously been turned south now looked north. Mr. Burns had a stentorian voice. . . . He . . . [denounced] the House of Commons as composed of capitalists who had fattened on the labour of the working men, and in this category he included landlords, railway directors, and employers. . . . To hang these, he said, would be to waste good rope, and as no good to the people was to be expected from these "representatives" there must be a revolution to alter the present state of things. The people who were out of work did not want relief, but justice. From whom should they get justice? From such as the Duke of Westminster? . . . The next time they met it would be to go and sack the bakers' shops in the West of London. They had better die fighting than die starving, and he again asked how many would join the leaders of the Socialists—a question in reply to which a great many hands were held up. . . . Those whom he was addressing, he said, pledged themselves to revolutionary doctrines, which elicited cries of "No, No." He concluded by asking the question, When we give a word for a rising, will you join us? to which a large number of the audience replied they would, and almost as large a number declared they would not.

118. HOW TO TRAIN FOR PUBLIC LIFE

From G. Bernard Shaw, *The Fabian Society*, 1892, pp. 16-17.

I MADE all my acquaintances think me madder than usual by the pertinacity with which I attended debating societies and haunted all sorts of hole-and-corner debates and public meetings and made speeches at them. I was President of the Local Government Board at an amateur Parliament where a Fabian ministry had to put its proposals into black-and-white in the shape of Parliamentary Bills. Every Sunday I lectured on some subject which I wanted to teach to myself; and it was not until I had come to the point of being able to deliver separate lectures, without notes, on Rent, Interest, Profits, Wages, Toryism, Liberalism, Socialism, Communism, Anarchism, Trade-Unionism, Co-operation, Democracy, the Division of Society into Classes, and the Suitability of Human Nature to Systems of Just Distribution, that I was able to handle Social-Democracy as it must be handled before it can be preached in such a way as to present it to every sort of man from his own particular point of view. . . .

I do not hesitate to say that all our best lecturers have two or three old lectures at the back of every single point in their best new speeches; and this means that they have spent a certain number of years plodding away at footling little meetings and dull discussions, doggedly placing these before all private engagements, however tempting. . . . It is at such lecturing and debating work, and on squalid little committees and ridiculous little delegations to conferences of the three tailors of Tooley Street, with perhaps a deputation to the Mayor thrown in once in a blue moon or so, that the ordinary Fabian workman or clerk must qualify for his future seat on the Town Council, the School Board, or perhaps in the Cabinet.

119. "FACTS FOR SOCIALISTS"

A good deal of Socialist propaganda by all groups consisted in popularising exposures of facts drawn from official sources. Sidney Webb's *Facts for Socialists*, quoted below, was the typical pamphlet of this kind; Bernard Shaw claimed that the idea came to him after reading Marx's *Capital*, which uses this technique extensively. *Facts for Socialists*, first published in 1886, has been republished with new material at intervals up to this day.

THE landlords (of more than ten acres) number only 176,520, owning ten-elevenths of the total area (Mulhall's *Dictionary of Statistics*, p. 341). . . .

The mortgage upon the industry of the community known as the National Debt was owned, in 1880, by only 236,514 persons, 103,122 of whom shared it only to the extent of less than £15 per annum. *ibid.*, p. 262.

Only 39 out of every 1,000 persons dying leave behind them £300 worth of property (including furniture, etc.) and only 61 per 1,000 leave any property worth mentioning at all. . . . (*Inland Revenue Report*, C, 1717).

From returns obtained from 8,121 Private and Government Works, employing 862,365 persons, it appears that the average annual wage per head amounted to only £48. These returns include the police and other public servants, but do not take any account of agricultural and general labourers. (*Annual Report of Labour Dept.* Board of Trade, 1893-4, C, 7565.)

120. LABOUR CHURCHES

The Labour Churches, whose influence was considerable, chiefly in the North, typified that link between Nonconformity and Socialism which was to become characteristic of the British movement, and were a very effective means of propaganda to men and women trained in chapels, choirs and Sunday schools. Extract a), describing the opening of Barrow's Labour Church, is from *The Labour Prophet*, January, 1893; b) is from a leaflet of October 2nd, 1892; c) is a list of lectures delivered to the Birmingham Labour Church, September–October, 1898; taken from the Minute Book of the Birmingham Labour Church, which was the main centre of the Labour Movement in Birmingham in the '90s. b) and c) are in Birmingham Public Library.

a) WE opened our Church on December 18th as announced. Ben Tillett was advertised to conduct the services; but owing to the outbreak of a strike among the dockers at Bristol, he was unable to be present. I am afraid the cause of Labour in Barrow would have received its death-blow, had it not been for our Comrade Robson, who undertook to go on with the services which were held in the Town Hall at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m., comrade M'Mullan in the chair. At each service the hall was crowded. We had made up our mind it was going to be a miserable failure on account of Ben Tillett's absence; but thanks to comrade Robson and to the band and the choir we have launched the Labour Church in Barrow most successfully. He preached from his own heart straight to the people's, and has cleared away some of the cobwebs from the minds of hundreds. Everyone was amazed to hear a workingman speak as he did. We cannot give too much praise to our band and choir, and especially to their conductor, Mr. Butterworth. Everyone was enquiring to whom the band and choir belonged, and when we told them "to the Labour Church" they would hardly believe us. It has been a very successful start and has given us new life and hope.

b) Our message has been that God is in the Labour movement and it has not been discredited. On this our

first anniversary we have a right to thank God and be glad and to commence another year's work full of energy and confidence.

COME AND JOIN US

It will do you good. It will do others good. It will make your life of more real worth to you. It will make the lives of others brighter and better. It will bring a practical and inspiring Religion into your heart and home, and will help you to understand and serve God more truly.

- c) Am I My Brother's Keeper?
Socialism and Art.
Lead Poisoning in the Potteries.
Our National Food Supply.
Man the Creator.
Where Are We and Whither Are We Going?
William Morris and His Work.
Patriotism: a Definition.

121. CHIMNEY SWEEP PROPAGANDIST

From J. Clayton, *The Rise and Decline of Socialism, 1884-1924*,
1926, pp. 93-4.

OUTSIDE the University, William Hines kept up the Socialist agitation in Oxford and the surrounding country. Hines, who came of peasant stock, was a chimney sweep by trade, and a follower of Bradlaugh before the rise of Socialism. He was a singularly effective speaker to agricultural audiences, and his recreation was addressing public meetings in the villages. He would persuade undergraduates to accompany him on these missions and get the Fabian Society to send him speakers from London. . . . It was in the '90s when Hines induced Bernard Shaw to speak at an open-air meeting in Dorchester. . . . Hines always liked to have singing at his meetings and usually one or more of his daughters accompanied him for that purpose. He compiled a collection of *Labour Songs for the Use of Working Men and Women*.

122. AN OLD I.L.P.-ER LOOKS BACK ON EARLY DAYS

From Ben Turner, *About Myself*, 1928, pp. 163-4. For Ben Turner, see No. 106.

I NEVER regretted those days. They were the days of soap-box and street-corner oratory. There was no pay for the job. Many of us have travelled many miles, spoken at a Sunday morning meeting, had a snack meal in a coffee house, gone to an afternoon meeting elsewhere, had tea with a comrade, done another meeting at night and gone home poorer and prouder for our task. There was real joy in the work, and to-day [1928] I speak at scores of meetings free of charge or cost and have the same joy as I had . . . 35 years ago. I am also proud I have a founder's certificate given to foundation members over a year ago, and I am doubly proud for my wife is also a foundation member, and a certificate holder like myself. Having worked for it, having held many shares in the old *Labour Leader*, and lost some bit of our savings, we don't—I speak for my wife and myself now—want to see the I.L.P. frittered away. There are a lot of folks yet to convert to Socialism, and that was the aim and object of the founders of the I.L.P.

123. CLARION CYCLISTS

The *Clarion*, by far the most effective organ of Socialist propaganda developed in this period, was started late in 1891 by a group headed by Robert Blatchford, a journalist of genius, already well-known to Northern readers under the name of "Nunquam." Its peak circulation was some 90,000. Its peculiar combination of propaganda, humour and joy of life appealed very strongly, chiefly in the North. In politics it was nearest the I.L.P., but reflected a stronger class consciousness. For Blatchford's *Merrie England* see No. 103.

The "Clarion Cycling Clubs" were started from 1894 (Birmingham being the first) and expressed that mixture of progressive politics and a fuller personal life which made the *Clarion's* success. Both extracts are from the *Clarion*: a) July 28th, 1894; b) April 28th, 1894.

a) I AM an ardent cyclist and have long desired to organise a "Clarion Cycling Club" in this city. . . . I write to ask

whether you will be good enough to mention the subject in the *Clarion* requesting all Clarionettes in Newcastle who are cyclists . . . to communicate with me. . . .

The principal objects of the club will be to visit outlying districts and scatter *Clarions* and Socialistic literature amongst the mining and agricultural population; and, if we have any good speakers among us, deliver addresses on Labour and social questions. . . .

In conclusion, allow me to thank you and the other members of your staff for the glorious revolution the *Clarion* has effected in me. I now have a purpose in life, and my heart yearns to relieve and mitigate the intense poverty and misery existing around me. Words are inadequate to express all I owe to you. Before reading your paper I was a rank Tory and a Sunday school teacher.

b) Next day we pushed on to Evesham, via Stourport, Ombersley, Worcester and Pershore. At Worcester we indulged in periphery swelling, consuming spring chickens (year doubtful), sampled the Cathedral and then in single file proceeded through the town. Suddenly the first man rang his bell and dismounted. . . . There is hope for Worcester—they sell the *Clarion* there. We all marched in in order and purchased our *Clarions*, and then as solemnly marched out. . . .

124. THE MINERS HEAR ABOUT SOCIALISM

From Edward Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, 1916, p. 134.

THE miners would really not be uninterested, but in their sullen, combative way they would take care not to show it. Many a time we have gone down to some mining village [in the West Riding—ED.] and taken up our stand on some heap of slag or broken wall, and the miners would come round and stand about or sit down deliberately *with their backs to the speaker*, and spit and converse, as if quite heedless of the oration going on. But after a time, and as speaker succeeded speaker, one by one they would turn round—their lower jaws dropping—fairly captivated by the argument.

125. KEIR HARDIE THE REBEL

When the House of Commons proposed an address of congratulation to Queen Victoria on the birth of her great grandson (the present Duke of Windsor) Keir Hardie alone protested, on the ground that the House took no notice of the mining disaster which had occurred near Pontypridd on the evening of the child's birth, killing 251 Welsh miners. Extract *a*) is from *Hansard*, June 28th, 1894; *b*) is from Hardie's article, "Snobbery," in the *Labour Leader*, June 30th, 1894.

a) As a matter of principle I protest against this motion being passed, and if there is another member of the House who shares the principles I hold I will carry my protest the length of a division. The Government will not find an opportunity for a vote of condolence with the relatives of those who are lying stiff and stark in a Welsh valley, and, if that cannot be done, the motion before the House ought never to have been proposed either. If it be for rank and title only that time and occasion can be found in this House, then the sooner that truth is known outside, the better for the House itself. I will challenge a division on the motion, and if the forms of the House will permit, I will go to a division. . . .

b) . . . Two hundred and fifty human beings, full of strong life in the morning, reduced to charred and blackened heaps of clay in the evening. The air rent with the wail of the childless mother, the widowed wife and the orphaned child. . . . Only those who have witnessed such scenes, as I have twice over, can realise what they mean. . . . We are a nation of hypocrites. We go wild with excitement and demand vengeance when some hungry half-mad victim of our industrial system seeks to wreak his vengeance on the society that is murdering him by inches; and we piously look heavenward and murmur about a visitation of providence when 250 miners are blown to bits because society places more value on property than it does on human life. Coal must be got cheap—even if 1,200 sturdy miners are murdered yearly in the process, 1,200 hearths made desolate.

126. AN OUTSIDER'S VIEW OF TOM MANN, 1895

From J. L. Garvin, "A Party with a Future," in the *Fortnightly Review*, September, 1895.

To the usual fierceness of his swarthy face, to the habitual menace of his facial gesture, he was led on this occasion to add the airs of a mountebank—shrugging his shoulders, spreading his arms, distorting his mouth and exciting roars of laughter by his whining parody of the Liberal workman. He laid himself out to split the ears of the groundlings. . . . And then he played to the passions of the gallery. He spoke here with terrible method and terrible intention. He knows all the hardship of a labouring life; he knows the discontents and resentments that labour broods over most sullenly; he knows how frequently workmen hate the very idea of having "a master"; and in this knowledge he deliberately touched his hearers on the raw, until they bayed with rage in response to the fierce, rancorous, sullen voice that seemed to be giving concentrated utterance to the deepest class-passions of their nature. He spoke of the machine-minder "afraid to straighten his back lest it should be marked down against him by a man with a watch, employed to follow him up like a sleuth-hound." . . . He denounced nationalism, He denounced the navy; he declared the navy to be an obstacle to the fraternisation of all workers. But Mr. Tom Mann's incendiary invective gradually passed into finer thought and not less effective appeal. In rapid and dark lines he sketched the intolerable fate of an Elswick labourer, whom he called "a 17s. and 10d. a week man with a small wife and a large family." He denounced that, he denounced all life on such terms. He called upon his audience to dare to be men; and "Now young chaps," he trumpeted, flinging up to the crowded galleries and side elevations an incitant gesture. "Now young chaps, what are *you* going to live for?" The "young chaps" were electrified.

Part Six

THE EMPLOYERS COUNTER-ATTACK

127. SHIPOWNERS ORGANISE, 1890

Letter from the Shipping Federation to members, October 20th, 1890. From the Royal Commission on Labour, 1892, XXXV, [6708-V] Group B, Appendix VIII.

DEAR SIR,—

I annex some brief notes on the present arrangements of the Shipping Federation which may be of use to you and your friends and guide them in case of need without their needing to write for instructions. . . .

The Federation intends primarily to secure to every man freedom to work at his own terms without interference and whether he belongs to any union or not. . . .

The Federation in the event of a dispute respecting wages, will assist owners in procuring crews and labourers at market rates. . . .

128. A SAD GAP IN THE LAW

From a letter from a Board of Trade Official who had been consulted by shipowners as to whether they could get men imprisoned for going on strike. Royal Commission on Labour, 1892, XXXV, [6708-V] Group B, Appendix XIX.

. . . YOUR owners evidently labour under a very great mistake in this matter. Parliament (most unfortunately) abolished imprisonment for desertion by the Merchant Shipping (Payment of Wages and Rating) Act, 1881, s. 10. The offence is now merely a breach of civil contract. . . . But this is no use. . . . There is also the power of hunting up and bringing back a deserter, but this is also a most ineffectual remedy. In fact your firm is powerless except to . . . press for an amendment of the law by reimposing imprisonment. . . .

129. BLACKLEG TICKET

From the card given to preference men by Messrs. Gray, Dawes & Co. Royal Commission on Labour, 1892, XXXV, [6708-V] Group B, Appendix XL.

BRITISH INDIA LINES

The holder of this ticket is:

Name

I undertake to work under the directions of Messrs. Gray, Dawes, and Co. or their superintendents, on any work they may give me to do, in and about their Ships in the Port of London, notwithstanding that other men in their employment on board the ships may or may not be Members of any Union, and subject to the regulations to which I have subscribed.

130. THE HULL FIGHT, 1893

This attack on the stronghold of the dockers' and seamen's union ended in victory for the shipowners after two months' fight. They set up "free labour" registries or exchanges, for the supply of non-unionist labour. Extract from an article by Clem Edwards (Dockers' Union) in the *Economic Journal*, 1893, p. 347-8.

RUMOUR soon fixed upon Hull, being the best-organised port, as the battleground for this undisguised attack upon unionism. . . . On March 20th a branch of the Exchange was opened and the following notice was issued:

BRITISH LABOUR EXCHANGE

TO WORKING MEN,—

The employers of labour in connexion with the docks and shipping at Hull have determined, in order to facilitate the conduct of business at the port, in employing labour in future *to give preference to men who are registered* . . . at the British Labour Exchange, which has been opened; and all respectable, steady workmen are invited to register their names free of expense, and thus secure preference of employment.

Round this attempt . . . to cripple the unions, has really centred the whole dispute.

131. THE COAL WAR, 1893

After a number of piecemeal attacks, coalowners in the area covered by the Miners' Federation (No. 62) demanded a 25 per cent. wage cut (later reduced to 15 per cent.) on account of falling prices, and imposed a lock-out which lasted fifteen weeks, July–November, 1893. Since its foundation in 1889, membership of the M.F.G.B. had increased from 36,000 to 200,000. Despite intense suffering, the miners held out for the principle of a minimum wage irrespective of profits, and their victory was a landmark in history (see No. 133). The struggle was ended by direct Government intervention, which granted (within district limits) the principle of a minimum wage and set up conciliation machinery. Work was resumed at the old rates. Northumberland, Durham, South Wales and most of Scotland remained outside the struggle. The following leaflet of the M.F.G.B. shows one of the methods by which solidarity was maintained. From the Webb Collection.

FELLOW WORKMEN,—

At the present time over 200,000 men and boys employed in and about the mines are still locked out. Employers pressing for a reduction of 15 per cent. Federation Conferences have decided that all men resume work at any colliery wherever they can at old rates, and pay a levy of 1s. per day to assist those who are still left to fight the battle. Those who are still working should not forget that if the men who²are still out are starved in at a reduction, they will also have to accept the same.

The men at work can easily pay the levy at present, as they will be working full-time. The men and their families who are still locked-out are wanting bread. The public are helping wonderfully, and we are relying upon our own men who have commenced working doing their duty, then we have no fear of the result.

Pits are being opened every day, we are winning all along the line; but remember the sufferings of your comrades, their wives and children who are still holding out.

Pay your levies like men and victory is sure. Let no man sneak away round some corner, but face your Secretary and pay your money willingly. You will feel all the better for it.

I am yours truly,

THOMAS ASHTON,

Secretary.

132. CO-OPS AND THE COAL WAR, 1893

From M. Llewellyn-Davies, *The Woman's Co-operative Guild, 1883-1904* (1904), p. 126, referring to the alliance between trade unions and co-operatives.

No greater proof could possibly have been given to trade unionists of the desirability of the alliance. . . . It would be interesting if a record had been compiled, of the assistance rendered by Co-operative Societies during the lock-out. . . . Some took in the children of starving families; others helped Relief Committees, distributed Co-operative flour tickets, and gave away clothing. As women, we rejoice in the part that was played by women, some employers going so far as to say that the men would have gone in at a reduction if it had not been for the women. They endured with uncomplaining fortitude, identifying themselves entirely with the men in the struggle. . . . "Though the very houses had been sold over their heads" [wrote an observer from the women's Co-op. Guild], "and they had neither money, furniture nor food, not one showed the slightest sign of giving way. We've only been getting 15s. a week; how can we take a reduction on that and live? We'd sooner clem playing than clem working if clem we must."

133. RESULTS OF THE COAL WAR

The following extracts from the *Economic Review*, January, 1894, illustrate the effect produced by the miners' victory.

a) by R. Grier (p. 74), on Cannock, rightly points to the strengthening of the Miners' Federation, which was to be joined by South Wales in 1899; b) by J. Chadburn (pp. 84-6), on Lancashire, refers to the minimum wage principle which began to operate at district level. A National Minimum Wage Act for the mines was however successfully delayed by the Liberals till 1912. See also W. Morris's letter, No. 51.

a) WHAT will be the effects of the strike? . . .

The Miners' Federation is stronger than it was. It may have no money; but it has more influence than it ever had. It is destined, I believe, to extend its borders and the experience which it has gained will make it much more formidable than before. I can readily understand the masters regarding it as a huge menace to our present industrial system. It is likely in the near future, unless a better understanding can be brought about between employers and employed, to become a much greater danger.

b) It is now clear that sellers of coal cannot recoup themselves for low prices by compressing wages down to the point at which decent life is impossible. Just as the royalty owner has behind him the majesty of the law . . . so the miner has the majesty of public opinion . . . to enforce his claim. It was grand and cheering during this struggle to see the great heart of England fired with a generous resolve not to let starvation come to the aid of the noble owner and the wealthy worker of the coal-beds in the struggle with the collier. . . . Prices must now start from the bed-rock of a living wage. . . .

But the grand lesson of the war has been a renewed revelation of the solidarity of labour. . . . The [Dock Strike] was the first evidence of what has been perhaps even more apparent in this coal war. . . . Then, for the first time the entire world of labour acted as a coherent whole. It was the most momentous thing of the century.

134. LIBERALS RECAPTURE THE T.U.C., 1895

The new rules adopted by the T.U.C. in 1895 were part of an attempt to exclude the Socialist element from the T.U.C., and were pushed through by an alliance of the most old-fashioned unionists with John Burns, the former left-winger, who thus succeeded in excluding Keir Hardie, to whom and to the I.L.P. he was consistently hostile. In many ways the Trades Councils had been the parents of the T.U.C. (see Vol. II in this series). The victory of the Liberals in the T.U.C. lasted only four years; the attempt to exclude Socialists was a complete failure. But the block vote and the other new rules remain to-day. The extract is from an editorial, *Daily Chronicle*, September 4th, 1895.

OUR readers are familiar with the changes that will be brought about by the decision of the Congress. The most crucial of these are the ruling out of all Trade Councils . . . and the introduction of . . . votes by proxy [i.e. the present block vote—ED.]. There is also the rule under which no delegate will be admitted to Congress unless he is actually working at his trade at the time of appointment. . . .

The thing has been done, and we confess—with much respect for the men who have done it—we are sorry. . . . It is an immense thing for this nation, and for every labouring nation, that the pioneers of organised Labour should stand, not for a section but for the whole of Labour. It took many years of agitation and sacrifice to abolish sectionalism in the Congress. We are afraid that yesterday's doings at Cardiff are a setback, and that they may spell trouble for the understanding between workers of all grades that has given hope and life to the Labour Movement and the politics of the last six years.

135. ONE RESULT OF THE BLOCK VOTE, 1896–9

Extract from "Notes of the Month," *The Trade Unionist*,
October, 1899.

AT the Plymouth Congress [of the T.U.C.] loud and deep were the complaints about the traffic in votes which went on. . . . Bargains were made and rejected according to

the . . . principles of the market place. If you had nothing or not enough to offer, you were sent empty away. . . . Neither was the caucus confined to one section for even the smaller societies made some attempt to establish it for themselves. . . . Of course [the bargaining for votes] is no new thing. . . .

The fact is that much depended upon the Miners' Federation, who held some 213 votes. They did not hesitate to work the caucus for all it was worth. . . . By using their organisations in voting, the miners and the textile trades largely dominate Congress. . . .

136. THE ENGINEERS' LOCK-OUT, 1897

The engineers' lock-out was a fight to the bitter end between the most highly organised section of the employers, the Engineering Employers' Federation, under Colonel Dyer, and the strongest of the old unions which had gone over to a "New Union" policy and elected an I.L.P.-er as General Secretary (see No. 88). Beginning with the engineers' attempt to extend the eight-hour day, the fight developed into a massive counter-attack by the employers which led to the men's defeat after months of struggle. The employers' case was first based on the alleged reluctance of the skilled men to work new labour-saving machinery, and the union's interference in "managerial functions" see b), but it gradually developed into an all-out attack on trade unionism (No. 137). Hence the complete victory of the employers strengthened the movement for trade union and political unity against them (No. 139) which eventually led to the Labour Party (No. 142). The lock-out lasted from July, 1897, till January, 1898. •

The men's case is taken from the *Clarion*, August 21st, 1897; the employers' case from a correspondence in *The Times* (September 7th, October 4th and 28th, 1897) and from the Federated Employers' manifesto, October 27th, 1897, rejecting Board of Trade mediation (*Times*, October 29, 1897).

a) THE MEN'S CASE

As the trial of strength between the masters and men in the engineering trade seems likely to be longer and sterner than many at first anticipated, it may be as well to tell the general reader how the struggle arose, why it

is being carried on, and what either side hopes or expects to gain by it.

It commenced as a purely London struggle, where the men . . . demanded a reduction of hours from nine to eight per day. . . . The struggle . . . would have ended as a London battle, had not the masters' federation chosen to make a national fight of it. . . . How [was] a local struggle . . . made national, and for what purpose [is] it . . . being waged? The answer is briefly as follows: the masters' federation, professing to fear that the London eight-hour demand might, if successful, lead to an extension of the demand in the provinces, called upon the employers in the engineering trade to lock out 25 per cent. of their men all over the country until the London dispute was ended. . . .

The men contend that the provincial lock-out could not be to combat a demand for an eight-hours day . . . and that in reality the desire of the masters' federation is to crush the engineers' union, of the power and stability of which they are jealous. The strike in London is practically over [as most firms had already conceded the eight hours—Ed.]. . . . The men in the provinces are willing to return to work, . . . having no dispute with their own masters, who are thus simply acting as the tools of a federation. . . .

There is nothing for it, then, but the assumption that the Employers' Federation is anxious to try conclusions with one of its most powerful adversaries, and thereby overthrow or weaken the growing power of the trade unions, and so keep in check the demands of labour for another generation.

b) THE EMPLOYERS' CASE

[*Colonel Dyer:*] The federated engineering employers are determined to obtain the freedom to manage their own affairs which has proved to be so beneficial to the American manufacturers as to enable them to compete . . . in what was formerly an English monopoly. This is what they are contending for.

[*J. Annand:*] If there is one fundamental principle that is more vital than another, it is that those who set in motion an industry, who bring together a vast army of men, who make themselves responsible for the safe use of the capital of thousands and millions of their countrymen, should be "masters in their own workshops." . . .

[*Federated Employers:*] The employers' committee fears that notwithstanding the first clause of your suggested basis, which provides in general terms that the federation and the trade unions are not to interfere with each other's proper functions, both the employers and the workmen will again be exposed to arbitrary restrictions and irritating interference with working arrangements which the leaders of the unions have freely threatened. . . .

During the past three months the employers have had an opportunity of ascertaining some of the effects of this interference. In many cases from 20-50 per cent. more work of equal quality has been produced from machinery by comparatively inexperienced hands compared with that produced by the men who previously worked the machines.

The employers are convinced that they cannot reduce the working hours as the keenness of foreign competition is increasing every day. . . .

137. ALL-OUT COUNTER-ATTACK

George Livesey, a prominent gas company director active in combating the "New Unionism," refers to the engineering employers in a letter to *The Times*, October 28th, 1897.

THEY [the engineering employers—ED.] are not fighting legitimate trade unionism, but Socialism, disguised under that name—some think it is only an excrescence, but I believe Socialism to be the very essence of present-day trade unionism, always excepting such men as Messrs. Burt and Fenwick [leaders of the North-Eastern Miners—ED.] . . . and two or three more like-minded . . . officials . . . who are willing to consider the employer's side as well as their own. . . .

If, as I believe, the above is the correct view of the position, there was no possibility of employers avoiding the fight, which sooner or later must come, and, once in it, what common ground is there for negotiation, mediation or arbitration? The ultimate object of the unions is entirely to dispossess the employers, and anything a mediation might obtain for them or an arbitration give, would only be regarded as an instalment of the whole which they claim as their right. . . . A stand must be made for the common good against the common enemy.

This stand is now being made by the engineering employers.

138. ENGINEERS AND MACHINES

In this period of rapid mechanical change the skilled workers fought strongly against their possible relegation to semi-skilled "machine-minders." The bitterness of the Engineers' Lock-out of 1897 was largely due to this question, which had already influenced the "New Unionism" (see No. 58). From George Barnes' Election Address in *Election of General Secretary, etc.*, 1898, A.S.E., p. 15.

I BELIEVE that the difficulty in regard to machines is very largely of our own making. Many of our members have refused to work machines, while at the same time a claim was made by others for the exclusive right to work such machines. This claim, I never endorsed, believing it to be sectional and selfish in character, and I believe that the only way in which we can acquire control of the rates paid for machine work is to show our superiority on high class work for which full wages ought to be paid, and to have proper graduated wage rates as well as a thorough understanding with other societies in regard to wages paid to operatives on those machines for which less skill is required. In this way only can we get the support of the whole body of Trade Unionists and put ourselves in line with trade development.

139. TOWARDS UNION FEDERATION

F. Chandler, General Secretary of the Woodworkers, draws the lesson of the Engineers' Lock-out, 1897. Annual Report, A.S.W., 1897, quoted by S. Higenbottom, *Our Society's History*, 1939, p. 117.

IN passing away from this subject I must add that, in my opinion, we shall deserve to be designated as dull scholars indeed if we do not learn much from this great industrial struggle. We have witnessed the success of a federation formed and matured on the lines of resistance in one exclusive industry, and it is reasonable to assume that the same principle properly worked out would tell in favour of labour; but we have not yet much reliable evidence that employees can so harmonise their conflicting interests as to be able to form a variety of trades for a similar purpose. Therefore, pending the settlement of the question of a general federation of trade unions our duty clearly is to urge forward and persevere in establishing more complete unity amongst what is known as the building trades, so that in the event of history repeating itself by substituting building trades for engineering trades, we shall then be prepared to meet it in one solid phalanx, instead of our strength being frittered away in sectional attempts to deal with an organised body of capitalists.

140. TAFF VALE: A STRIKE-BREAKER
REMEMBERS

This was the strike which led to the Taff Vale Judgment (see No. 141). The quotation below from W. Collison, *Apostle of Free Labour*, 1913, pp. 141-2, illustrates the working of "Free Labour Exchanges," or blackleg supply organisations, which were widespread in the '90s (see No. 130).

WHEN this strike began, I had been, by a fortunate coincidence, preparing for a threatened strike on the Great Eastern Railway, and our Free Labour Exchange had registered 2,500 men suitable for all grades of Railway employment and capable of immediate mobilisation.

Altogether I signed on 475 men of whom 197 were despatched to the scene of action, while the remaining 278 were held in reserve, ready at any moment "to go anywhere and do anything."

Although the Taff Vale Company only sent in a request for men late on the Tuesday, I was in a position to despatch by the Wednesday about one hundred drivers, guards, signalmen, brakesmen and firemen. . . . In the course of the next few days other contingents were sent down. . . .

But they were not allowed to reach their destination unmolested. The first batch had the misfortune to arrive at Cardiff early in the morning when it was still dark.

For about half a mile out of Cardiff to the station, the strikers had put fog signals down very close to each other, and the train entered the station to the accompaniment of an apparently endless series of detonations more resembling a bombardment than anything else. Thus warned of our approach, the station was filled with Union pickets, and 28 of my men were forcibly made prisoners, marched to the Union headquarters in Cathays, locked in and then when the time arrived, marched back to the station and entrained for London. . . .

Then Mr. W. Abraham, M.P., threatened that if "Collison's blacklegs" were introduced to handle the traffic, the colliers would refuse to dig coal at the pits, and the tippers at the Docks were called upon to refuse to deal with the coal when it arrived for shipping; and the porters of the Rhondda even hesitated to carry the luggage or attend to the passengers driven by Free Labour. One of the greatest difficulties we had to fight was the offensive hostility of the servants of the Great Western Railway, both at Paddington and down the line. They not only gave no assistance to the Free Labour men, but gave information which was positively misleading. They gave such facilities for the interference of the Union pickets, that on one occasion these gentry got on the line, and told our official in charge of a contingent of Non-Unionists from Manchester that the Manager of the Taff Vale had

sent them, and as they wore the Taff Vale Company's uniform they were believed and so our men walked with them and to their astonishment found themselves not at the Taff Vale Offices but at the strikers headquarters instead.

141. TAFF VALE AND THE LAW

Attempts to reinterpret the law against the trade unions had begun in the '90s; the Taff Vale Judgment, by making a union liable for damages claimed against its members in a strike, threatened to make any dispute financially impossible. It thus forced the union to fight for a new Act of Parliament and to throw their weight behind the newly-formed Labour Representation Committee, which became the Labour Party. Taff Vale "made" the Labour Party. The Judgment was nullified by the Act of 1906. The extract is from an article by Sir Godfrey Lushington, *National Review*, Vol. 38, 1901, p. 563.

IN my opinion it is just and salutary law. On principle I know of no reason why Trade Union funds should be exempt from liability, and very strong ones why they should not be exempt. . . . The law will be a great protection to the public, perhaps the chief sufferer; to the employers it will secure some portion of the redress to which they are entitled . . . even to the Trade Unions themselves it should be a blessing in disguise. To any man or body of men immunity to commit wrongs is not a privilege but a lowering condition.

For the moment the law as laid down by the House of Lords is much resented by Trade Unionists. But it will be useless for them to ask Parliament to abolish it. It is founded on justice and the public good. Still more useless to attempt to evade it. . . . If my coachman John, driving my carriage, has a collision through carelessness and causes damage to a third person, it is no good for me to plead that I told John over and over again to be careful. So a Trade Union will be answerable in its funds for any wrongful act done by its officers "acting within the scope of their employment" whatever the instructions.

142. THE LABOUR PARTY

The Labour Representation Committee was founded in February, 1900, as a federation of trade unions and Socialist societies (the co-ops at first refused to join). It was the result of Socialist initiative at the T.U.C. of 1899, and very active I.L.P. preparation. Its inaugural meeting rejected proposals that it should adopt Socialist aims, and bound it to no programme, only laying down, on the proposition of Keir Hardie, that Labour men should form a distinct group with their own Whips in Parliament, and be ready to co-operate with any party promoting legislation in Labour's interest or opposing measures having a contrary tendency.

The report on its inauguration, from the *Clarion* (March 10th, 1900) shows the "wait and see" attitude of most contemporary Socialists to it. It was only after the Taff Vale Judgment (No. 141) that it became a serious force, and, in 1906, the Labour Party.

At last there is a United Labour Party, or perhaps it would be safer to say, a little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, which may grow into a United Labour Party. . . . The Conference has . . . demonstrated that—

Half-a-million workers see the necessity for direct representation in Parliament.

Half-a-million workers are determined that when they have sent representatives to Parliament, those representatives should work harmoniously together to further the interests of Labour.

That half-a-million workers are determined to put a stop to the custom of certain Labour M.Ps. in the past of assisting candidates who are opposed to legislation in the interests of Labour.

Some optimistic views as to the result of the Conference have been expressed. . . . The weak point about the United Labour Party is that no organised attempt is to be made to collect funds for election expenses and for the payment of their members. . . . [This was remedied in 1902—Ed.]

Of course, it is impossible yet to say what the intentions of the new party are. There is no programme formulated.

But it is to be hoped that they will steer clear of entanglements with the official Liberal Party, who are nothing but Tories in disguise and the unavowed but none the less vigorous enemies of all legislation which makes for Collectivism. . . .

It may be a matter of congratulation that the different Labour bodies have met to assert a pious belief in the necessity for Labour Representation, but if they are not prepared to back up their convictions in a practical manner little progress will be made. . . .

Time, good old time, will show. We will live in hope.

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